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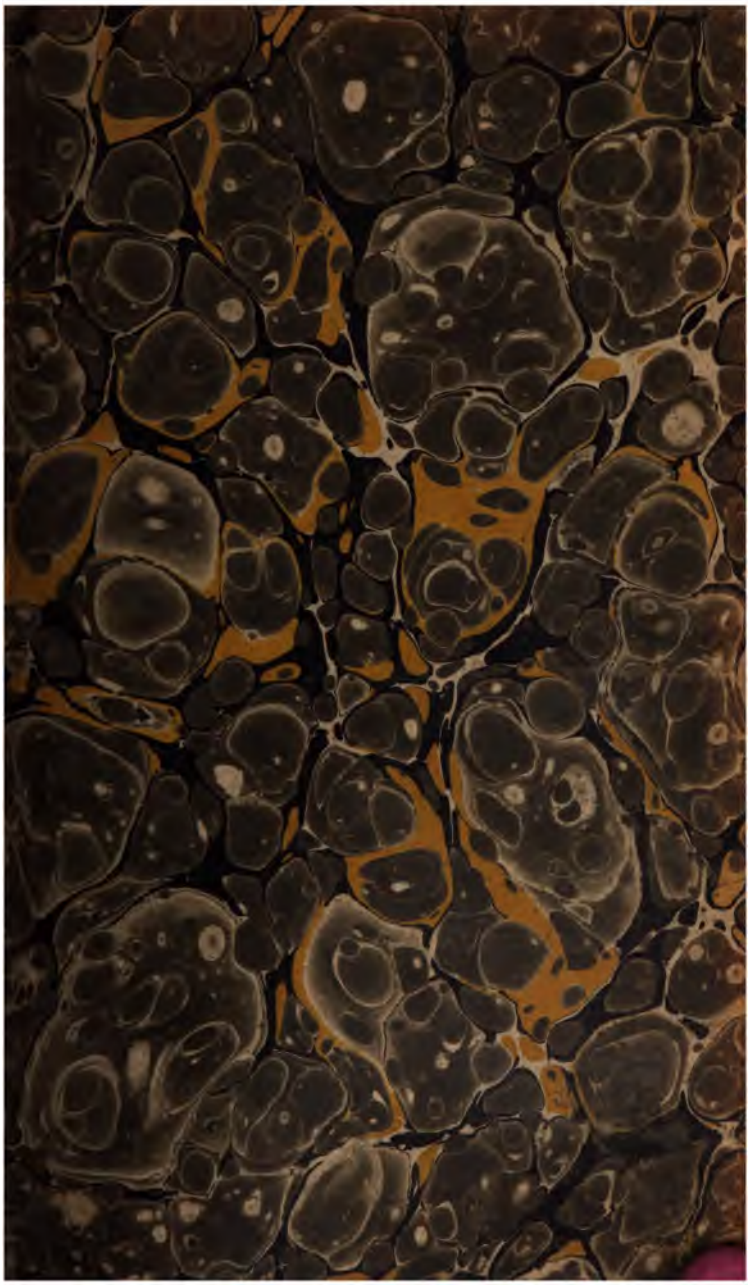

ROSABELLA:

OR,

A MOTHER'S MARRIAGE.

VOL. IV.

Printed by S. Hamilton, Weybridge, Surrey.

ROSABELLA:

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A NOVEL.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

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SANTO SEBASTIANO, OR, THE YOUNG PROTECTOR;
THE FOREST OF MONTALBANO; AND
ADELAIDE, OR, THE COUNTERCHARM.

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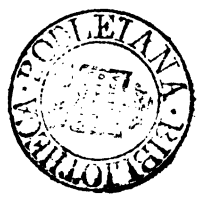

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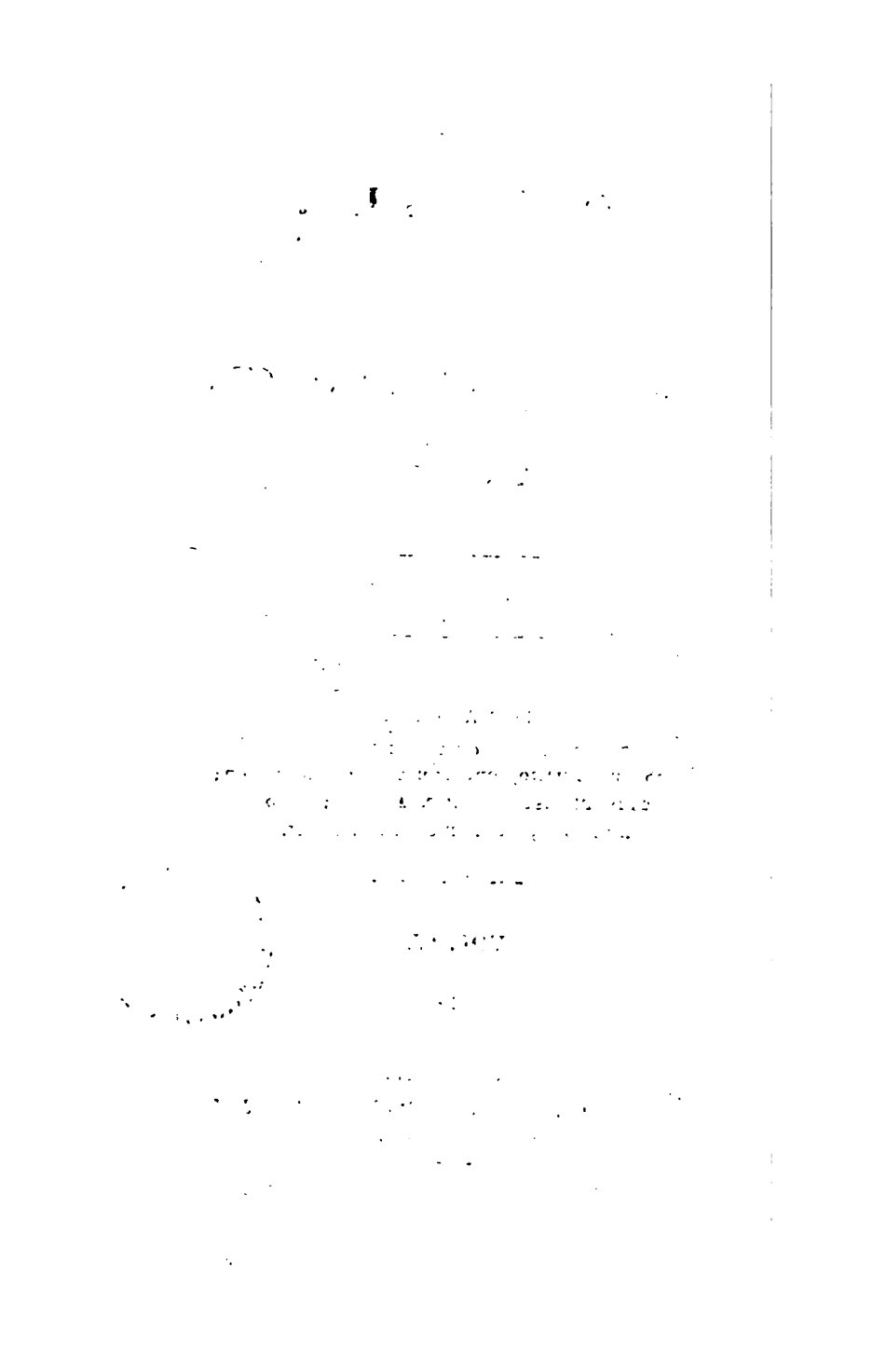


ROSABELLA.

CHAPTER I.

On the subsequent day, immediately after the return of the family from attendance at divine service, Lord Flowerdew led as many of his male inmates as were inclined to pedestrian exercise, to view a purchase of a cottage he had recently made in the immediate neigbourhood of his own villa; and as they were proceeding to it, they were most unexpectedly joined by Miss Delvely, who exclaimed:

"You are going to your delectable *cottage orné*, Lord Flowerdew. Compassionate me, and allow of my accompanying you; since it is my established rule to walk, except in the event of rain, im-

mediately after I return from church, as I find it the best method of thoroughly awaking."

Lord Flowerdew, after politely acceding to this request, inquired "were her faculties so entranced by her devotion as to require arousing?"

"Dear, no," she replied, "but morning service is so unreasonably long, it is utterly impossible to remain animate through it. I used to pronounce Mrs. Veneer really little less than a barbarian, to give us Italian exercises a yard long to make; a speech in a German play to get off; or an extract from Voltaire, or a Spanish tale, to translate into not less than four different languages, if she detected any of us in the fact of napping at church; which was inevitable, when the pulpit orator was neither old enough, nor ugly enough to quiz; or the sermon too insipidly unexceptionable to criticise. But, *a-propos* of soporificks;" and now, drawing off to join Lord Bayswater in the path he had taken, lowering her voice, particularly addressed him.

"Pray how does your lordship contrive to get on at your *lourd* abode? Conceive our chagrin, after hazarding our precious lives across the common in search of *vivacité de l'esprit*, to find such an assemblage of *scipidezza*,—all *doloroso*, except your lordship, and indeed, that rather pretty Lady Milli, or Filli, or Silliora; and that novel enthusiast, who, *per vita mia*, I expect will fly off some day for Dover Castle, make her *logement* in some of the subterraneous excavations, and order His Majesty's forces to march off without beat of drum, as unlawful usurpers of that exalted edifice her *patrimoine*."

"Not impossible," replied his lordship, "if she can win you for her auxiliary. Mary Eorrain loves to make sport withal; and can sometimes, by her lively management, bring hidden things to light; can draw from the secret springs of knowledge its concealed lore; as now she has brought forth your intimate acquaintance with a heroine of celebrity, Miss Delvely.

"*Che bel modo di procedere!* to condescend to quiz!" exclaimed Miss Delvely,

looking not a little confused. "But really now, that was too bad to run off such a torrent of enthusiasm, if it was not *vrai*. Why, her raptures came pouring down like melting lava from Mount Vesuvius, desolating my poor *capacité*, and lo! reduced me to the necessity of retiring behind that structure of *calcinaccio*, Mrs. Racket was pleased to raise at random for my poor brains; where nothing but the truest blossoms from the classic soil used to sprout, or were genial to it; and from the same lady's quotations from her favourite heroine am I indebted for any knowledge upon the subject."

This infectious burst of absurdity led his lordship at once into the regions of bombast; and he flourished off into a strain of complimentary rhetoric, the tropes and figures of which elicited a further display of her surpassing attainments; which at length led her prancing on her vanity's hobby to the point where the rambles of vanity often lead — to the gates of envy; where entering, she commenced an amiably soft wail, for "the pitiable ne-

science of that Miss—Somebody—that mild looking ninny, who had learned nothing, and knew nothing."

Lord Bayswater affecting not to comprehend whom she could mean, she replied,

"The girl your lordship sat by; and who told me herself she never went to school!—never had a governess!!"

"What say you to a preceptor?"

Miss Delvely now uttered a cry of almost anguished amazement; but quickly renovating her composure, said in a self-consolatory sort of tone—

"Then I suppose, my lord, she may possibly be a good arithmetician, and a mathematician, and a geometrician, and a logician, and a rhetorician, and a—a—a—but she cannot know any thing of modern accomplishments; since no one person under the sun could teach them all."

"Why, I should suppose, as easily as any one person under the sun could learn them all. However, one acquirement—or rather I should call it, an intuitive charm—Miss Frederick is possessed of—

that of modestly bearing her own mental treasures without display."

"Mental treasures!" Miss Delvely exclaimed, in a tone of dismay; "dear me, I wish I had my note again; for do you know, my lord,—believing her to be an insipid ignorant Irish Miss, I dispatched as stupid a composition as I could with infinite labour fabricate, as suited to meet the capacity of an unaccomplished unfortunate,—not wishing to awe or dazzle her by any apparent superiority; and now, as she is a Madame Dacier, or de Staël, she will hold me mortifyingly cheap."

"It was an untoward circumstance certainly," said Lord Bayswater, affecting seriousness; "but although so learned herself, she possesses such benevolence of heart, she makes every charitable allowance for those who are not so mentally gifted."

But the sarcastic propensity of Lord Bayswater here discharged an arrow of mortifying insinuation, the young lady's vanity could not sustain without writhing;

and, blanching to the lily's hue, she declared, "she had walked far enough for her purpose of renovating her faculties, after the soporific of church administration;" and being arrived at a door which led into her uncle's grounds, she bid Lord Flowerdew and party adieu, and scampered in half breathless speed and agony home, in the forlorn hope of her note not having yet been sent, to commit her in the estimation of the learned woman she had inadvertently addressed.

At length, after viewing the cottage, this party of male pedestrians were pacing their way homeward, when, finding the sun, in his approach to the zenith of his power, oppressively annoying, Lord Flowerdew led them for shelter from its subduing influence through an adjoining copse; and as they were comfortably enjoying its shade, and laughing as they sauntered at the panic into which Lord Bayswater's mischievous representations of Miss Frederick's attainments had thrown the accomplished Flora, their mirth was sud-

denly arrested by a sound of convulsive sobs of violent grief, issuing from a thicket they just were passing. Instantly all following the resistless attraction of the sound, penetrated to the spot from whence it proceeded; where they beheld a young woman, cleanly but meanly attired, in the style of dress which proclaimed her an Hibernian, with an infant asleep in her arms, and seated on the stump of a tree, weeping as if her heart was bursting.

The extreme beauty of the infant, with the deep affliction of the mother—whose pretensions to personal attraction were all blighted by her heart rending sorrows —instantly awakened the commiseration of all; and in a tone of kindness Lord Flowerdew inquired, "could any thing be done for the mitigation of her distress?"

"Oh! no, no, no, your honour!" she with difficulty articulated, as she raised a pair of large and lately brilliant eyes, now dimmed by sorrow's bitter tears. "You cannot raise the dead! There is

no comfort for the widow, but in the hope that pitying Heaven will soon take me to join my husband."

"But for the sake of your helpless child, you must strive to bear your sorrows," said Lord Flowerdew, kindly.

The young woman looked on her babe with the gaze of anguished affection, pressed it to her bosom with a convulsive grasp, and burst into a new agony of tears.

"May I ask, without increasing your distress," said Lord Flowerdew, "whence you came, whither you are going, and if I can be of service in affording you the means of procuring comforts for yourself and child?"

"The blessing of Heaven be ever upon you, and all belonging to you!" convulsively sobbed out the weeping sufferer. "But I want no relief such as your honour's goodness would bestow upon me. I am come from the War Office, at least, yesterday I did,—but until I was able to shed a tear, a little bit ago, my head I believe was gone; for the news I received first struck my heart cold, and then my

head seemed stunned; and I remember nothing that befel me since, but my wishing to get back to my own country as fast as I could, to give my child to my mother's care, ere my heart burst quite; but somehow I have wandered, I find upon inquiry, out of the right road to Ireland; and, what is worse, have lost my bundle too; and missing that, recalled me to the power of shedding tears,—for that was a cruel loss, as in it were all the letters he ever wrote to me since we parted, except the last—but the last I always kept next my heart, until I got another from him; so, thanks to the Almighty, *one is* spared to me."

"Poor young creature!" exclaimed Major Arundel; "your husband was, I conclude, a soldier."

"Oh! yes, yes, yes; and more grief to me! was he, your honour; and you, nor no man ever seen a braver nor he. If he had died for any use to his country, the blow, I think, would not have fallen so cruelly:—but, he was slain at Bayonne."

"Alas!" said Major Arundel. "But are you sure he fell? May he not have been wounded, and a prisoner; and in the subsequent hurry and confusion on being missing, reported slain."

The young mourner caught his hand with the convulsive grasp of almost maniac hope; then suddenly let it drop, as despondingly she said—

"Ah! no, your honour, there is no hope for me, since, had Corney been living, he would have contrived to let me know it was not dead he was; and sure the gentleman at the office read it out of a book for me, that he was killed in action."

"But how came you to obtain this intelligence so late?" demanded Sir Simon Townhurst. "Were you not very dilatory in your inquiries?"

"I inquired as soon as ever I could, your honour, for I only finished my walk up from Liverpool yesterday; and it was not the instant moment I heard the cruel news from Bayonne, that I would be setting out from the county of ——, bekease,

your honour, I had to wait in the dearly cherished hope of a letter coming from Corney; but my hope was blasted: and not being able to endure the agony of suspense longer, my poor mother sold her cow, and all she could turn into money, for me to set out to London; for I would not trust my inquiries for Corney to any one but myself; for feard, not being anxious like a wife, they might be lukewarm about him; so I did make the inquiry, and—and—and—Corney was laid low." And now, unable to articulate more, she grasped her smiling infant to her bosom, and wept in agony.

"But poor unfortunate!" said Lord Bayswater, compassionately, "you cannot surely mean to commence your return to your native country, ere you have recovered the first shock of your grief, and the fatigue of your astonishing undertaking?"

"Oh! your honour, but I must; for long, I know, my heart cannot hold together; and who then will take my boy to my mother?"

"I will take care to have your child, and yourself too, I trust, safely conveyed to your home," exclaimed Lords Flowerdew and Bayswater and Major Arundel together.

The afflicted woman's gratitude now seemed about to subjugate her intellect; and was so affectingly expressed, it penetrated to the heart of all her auditors, save Lord William, on whom an idea had fastened worthy of his pursuits, the moment he learned how far affection had led her to walk, and who now eagerly said—

"I'll undertake her walk back to Liverpool shall be one of such emolument and comfort to her, that it shall teach her to forget her recent loss, in the acquirement of a handful of the needful to take her home, and purchase another husband. She shall perform it for a wager in a given time; and we men of the turf will attend her, and while making our bets, procure—"

"You unfeeling monster!" Lord Flowerdew exclaimed, in stern displeasure; "how I blush at your power of claim-

ing kindred with me! and know not which to despise, you or your unworthy pursuits, the most heartily: but let me not hear the cause of humanity again insulted by such savage propositions." Then turning kindly to the poor disconsolate, his lordship said—

"You are not, I trust, too much fatigued to extend your walk to my house, where you must rest until I find you equal to returning home by a more comfortable mode, than the one you have projected for yourself."

"And during that time of rest, it shall be my care to make the strictest inquiries at the War Office, if the statement you received was correct," said Major Arundel.

The gratitude of the poor mourner subdued for many moments her power of rising to attend the benevolent Lord Flowerdew to the temporary asylum he had offered her; but when at length her susceptible feelings permitted her to speak, as she commenced her walk, she informed his lordship, "she should not have oc-

casion to trespass on his bounty for the expense of her journey home, as she had not spent quite half the sum she had commenced her journey with; and that if she lived to reach the county of——, she should there experience no want."

"Since you reside in the county of——, perhaps you know Lady Derville," said Major Arundel.

"That I do, your honour, and more grief to me for that same!" she replied; "for poor Corney's farrum was on my lord's land; and my lady, being all one as an absentee, never seeing after the affairs herself, leaving all to her agent, who grinds the poor tenants down like rags for paper; and he it was, that drove poor Corney to go for a soldier; and I, from being too near my time, ochone! could not go with him, when he embarked for Holland."

"But why did you not make known to Lady Derville the reprehensible conduct of her agent?" asked Lord Bayswater.

"Oh! your honour, the plaints of the poor have no voice to be heard against the powerful; although Heaven sent us an angel of pity and kindness, who saved many a heart from bursting, by the balms her compassion poured into them; and who represented our case, many a time, to my lady; and had sometimes such influence, that she saved our cattle from being drove, and many evils; and though she was unsuccessful for us at the last, she never forsook me. She stood godmother to this, now poor orphan boy, who never, hapless wretch! beheld his father; and to her I look for consolation, should I ever see my home."

"Lady Meliora Monson, I conclude you mean as this angel of benevolence?" said Major Arundel, alive to the remembrance of how like an angel she had looked, in the last moment he had gazed upon her.

"Lady Meliora Monson," replied the poor disconsolate, "is nothing to me, nor to any in misfortune. No, your honour,

it is of one Miss Frederick I speak—one who is poor in fortune, but rich in the blessings of those she has befriended."

"This woman is an impostor!" exclaimed Lord William, enraged at her detracting from the merit of Lady Meliora; and, still more so, for causing the stern rebuke of his uncle. "How could she be a tenant of Lord Derville's, and talk of Miss Frederick's consoling her on her immediate return to Ireland?"

The same idea of a contradictory statement had struck the other gentlemen, but without any suspicion of imposture, since that, from the genuine aspect of her affliction, they considered an impossibility; but, to have the matter satisfactorily explained, Lord Flowerdew mildly inquired—Since she had left the county of —— so recently, how she came not to know Miss Frederick was not there to console her on her return.

The astonishment of the young woman at what his lordship's speech implied, of his knowing Miss Frederick, with her shame and sorrow for having spoken so

unguardedly of Lady Meliora to those who she saw were no strangers to her ladyship, threw such an appearance of embarrassment into her aspect, that, for a moment, excited suspicions to her disadvantage. But soon she recovered her self-possession sufficiently to impart her further misfortune—" of having had her dwelling set on fire by those disaffected to government, in consequence of her husband not joining in the seditious parties he had been strongly urged to unite with, but evincing his loyalty by enlisting for a soldier; and that all she possessed being thus cruelly consumed in a very short time after her confinement, she had been removed by the humanity of Lord Montalbert,—who had promised her a *farrum* for Corney when he returned—to a temporary asylum, near thirty miles from Ravenswood, out of the way of those her husband had offended by his principles; and, by that means, she had known nothing of what had occurred at Ravenswood for many months."

" Well," cried Lord William, " we

shall shortly ascertain if all this is fact, for, in the smack of a whip, you will——"

"Probably see some person from your own county," said Lord Flowerdew, interrupting him; in anxiety that the poor woman's evident susceptibility might not be so much overpowered by surprise, as to subdue her faculty of walking.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "could it in possibility be my dear Miss Rosa, I would then care not how soon my heart went asunder."

In a few moments after this last reply, they entered the paddock in which Lord Flowerdew's villa stood; and on the lawn before the house, and under the luxuriant shade of some flourishing acacias, were seated Lady Flowerdew and the remainder of her party, except our heroine, who had been drawn away by Lord Belford to visit his pony; and now, with augmented speed, our pedestrians hastened to join the group—Lord William, all anxiety to have the impostor detected who had dared to calumniate the benevolence of the beautiful Meliora, whose deforming affectation

had not lessened materially his admiration; for, as long as he considered a woman superlative in beauty, he cared little how absurd her manners might be; nor would any defect in moral conduct have impeded the excess of that admiration, or given him one uneasy pang, had he not had in contemplation an union with her; and, in that event, his honour, his happiness, and, above all, his *éclat*, might be affected by the absence of domestic virtue.

Major Arundel sincerely hoped to find the poor soldier's widow had been deceived in the opinion she had formed of Lady Meliora's benevolence; for, although the effect of her beauty upon his fancy had been considerably weakened by the disfiguring aspect of her affectation, and that a thousand, and a thousand times since the preceding evening, he had wished that Rosa could exchange forms with Lady Meliora, or Lady Meliora manners with our heroine; he had not been prepared to throw mind also into the exchange for Lady Meliora's improvement: and now,

the apprehension of her ladyship having more serious defects, than even excess of vanity, to dim the lustre of her charms, inflicted upon him a degree of pain alarming to himself.

The feelings of Lord Bayswater upon the occasion deviated from both; since he entertained not even the shadow of a doubt of all he had heard being true—that Rosabella was all perfection: nor was he a moment longer in uncertainty of he himself being seriously in love; or that, in dispute of the dire belief—of the bar of illegitimacy, would this perfect work of nature listen to his suit, the portionless Rosabella should be Countess of Bayswater.

CHAPTER II.

"I HAVE brought you, Cecilia," said Lord Flowerdew, as he approached his wife, "a poor, afflicted child of misfortune, for that balm of comfort for her wounds, which your benevolence so aptly and kindly leads you ever to supply."

Lady Flowerdew, with an aspect of that benevolence, which he who knew her best knew was inherently her bosom's inmate, now inquired the nature of the affliction, which had set the stamp of its reality upon the wanderer's appearance. Whilst she did so, Lord William's observation of no mark of recognition being evinced between the young woman and Lady Meliora, led him, in mental exultation, to pronounce his own sagacity in detecting a defaming impostor; and, scarcely had Lord Flowerdew completed a succinct account of the poor woman's calamity, when Lord William hastily exclaimed—

"But you know this person, Lady Meliora Monson; as her family are tenants of your brother's."

The prompt negative of her ladyship, with the poor woman's flush of regret and shame for having so inadvertently spoken her sentiment of Lady Meliora, awakened a belief, that, although she assuredly was in genuine affliction for her husband, she had not given an authentic history of herself.

In this moment, when doubt suspended the activity of Lord and Lady Flowerdew's purposes of benevolence, Lord Belford and Rosabella made their appearance upon the lawn; and, the moment the stranger caught a full view of her, she uttered a cry of joyful surprise, and achieving her effort of rushing to her, as she faintly articulated her name, fell at her feet, subdued, at the same moment, by joy and grief into a death-resembling swoon.

Rosabella's recognising exclamation of "Nancy Mahon!" was promptly succeeded by the exertions of her humanity. Lord

Bayswater had providentially snatched the infant from its mother's arms as she commenced her almost frantic rush towards our heroine, and thus saved him from the danger that else awaited him from his mother's fall.

Never, perhaps, had Rosabella appeared to greater advantage than at the moment when all the party were circling round her to afford relief to the swooning woman, for she had promptly sunk on the grass, and drawn the now inanimate Nancy's head upon her lap; and, whilst withdrawing her cloak to promote her respiration, her lovely countenance portrayed the most interesting anxiety.

"You know this woman, and she is no impostor," exclaimed Lord William, in a tone of chagrin.

"Yes, poor thing, I know her well; and know her incapable of imposture, my lord," Rosa replied: "and seeing her here in such a state alarms me with apprehension for the fate of her excellent husband; and, should my fears be just, her heart will surely break, for her suscep-

tibility is extreme, and their attachment was indeed a strong one."

Lord Flowerdew now confessed to Rosa, that her anticipating alarm was but too prophetic; and, at this intelligence, the sympathy and affecting kindness of our heroine but increased admiration's influence upon those who were attentively observing her, as they lent their aid for the recovery of poor Nancy; who, at length, through the humane exertions of all surrounding her, evinced symptoms of reanimation; and, when their kind endeavours effected the restoration of her faculties, and tears came in torrents to relieve the oppressive burden on her heart, Rosabella raised her drooping head to her bosom, as she spoke the soothings of gentle, pitying kindness.

"Ah! Miss Rosa," sobbed out the heart-rived Nancy; "it was thus, on your tender, pitying bosom, my first babe breathed its last innocent sigh; but Corney, Miss, —— my Corney, breathed his last on the cold and blood-stained earth!— Oh! Miss Rosa, had I been but with him

to comfort his last moments with the tender offices of one who cared for him—but to know, without a tear shed over him he died, has broken quite my heart, Miss Rosa dear."

Rosa endeavoured to speak some words of consolation to her, but they died on her lips: yet the augmenting tears of sympathy, that betrayed how much she felt for her, were, perhaps, more welcome, and more endearing comfort; and the uplifted eyes of the weeping mourner, gazing on our heroine, as the ministering angel of consolation, whilst causing an increase of admiration for the benevolent and lovely Rosabella, awakened astonishment not very flattering to her young friend, at her not knowing even by sight a worthy resident on the domain she lived on, who had called forth and received the humane attentions of an inmate in the very house which she inhabited.

The magical influence of Rosa's soothing, combined with her own just idea of what she owed, in gratitude and respect, to those who were evincing such benevolence to

her, soon effected sufficient composure in the bosom of the afflicted Nancy, to enable her to comply with the kind wish of Lady Flowerdew to enter the house for refreshment and repose; and which, she was informed, should be her asylum, until she was equal to set out for Ireland.

Lady Flowerdew and Rosa both attended the poor mourner to the house; the former to place her in the especial care of her worthy housekeeper, the latter to give her sorrows all the comfort the presence of a long known friend could yield her, where all others but Betty Roach were strangers to her; and, after feeding her child, and herself taking a little tea, the only nourishment she could be prevailed upon to partake of, she was persuaded to retire to her pillow, to seek a temporary oblivion to her woe in a renovating sleep; when our heroine returned to the party she had left upon the lawn, to inquire from Lord Flowerdew — if such a thing was possible as error in the return of killed and wounded from Bayonne.

"Because," she added, "I think there

is scarcely presumptive proof, even through his silence, of Corneille Mahon's having fallen; as the agony of Nancy's solicitude to learn authentic intelligence of his fate, —that, if wounded, she might immediately proceed to join him,—only allowed her to remain at home five days after she had calculated upon hearing from him; and therefore, my lord, may we not build some hope upon the possible delays—where winds and waves, with irregular cross-posts, are agents in the conveyance of letters,—which may have conspired to retard a letter from Corneille on its way; and to which her change of abode may too probably have contributed: and even now a letter may be withheld in the hands of her mother, who, from poor Nancy having no particular haven to make for here, where all was a new world to her, possessed no clew to send it after her:— but, although hope, through this possibility, has awakened in my mind, I have of course foreborne to communicate it to poor Nancy, lest it might prove delusive."

Instantly, upon this possibility of a hope

to rest upon being presented to the humane Lord Flowerdew, he dispatched his private secretary, with a letter from himself to the Adjutant-General, requesting to have the returns from Bayonne again inspected, for the information he was most anxious to obtain of the fate of Corneille Mahon.

Lady Townhurst, by no means pleased at Lady Meliora's assumption of the part of first beauty, where she was to contest that pretension to pre-eminence, now requested to know,

"Why Miss Frederick seemed so interested for this Nancy Mahon, and appeared to be such an absolute idol of hers, whilst Lady Meliora knew nothing of her, since both young ladies lived in the same house?"

The young friends blushed, whilst tears were ready to flow at a question, which each equally shrunk from answering with ingenuousness; and, whilst Lady Meliora felt tortured by the humiliation her own omissions had so unexpectedly prepared for her, the affectionate Rosabella's wound-

ed friendship led all her active thoughts in a tumult of wild eagerness, to seize on something in the form of extenuation of her dear Meliora; and, blushing still more deeply at her unusual adoption of subterfuge for truth, she replied—

"Commanders do not always send their forces, Lady Townhurst, upon the same march, to effect their purposes.—We each filled the department the benevolence of Lady Derville assigned us."

The blush of pleased surprise, which cheered the countenance of Lady Meliora, with the look of genuine gratitude she darted at her friend, was not lost on Lord Bayswater nor Major Arundel, who, having learned much of the true state of the case from the testimony of Nancy Mahon, knew how to appreciate this affectionate effort to repel suspicion; in which, too, their admiration was taught to glow for the amiable modesty, which threw from herself to Lady Derville the sole merit of that benevolence she had practised.

And now, at this moment, the butler presented a packet to our heroine from

Miss Delvely; and, as he intimated the messenger had orders to wait for an answer, Rosa requested permission from Lady Flowerdew to peruse it.

This billet of Miss Delvely's, written closely in a small neat hand, was extended through seven sheets of note paper; and, upon the intimation of the bantering Lord Bayswater, written with the most elaborate care, since her fortunate speed home had enabled her to arrest her careless billet, to set all her energies upon the rack of inventive genius, and to arouse every particle of information she had acquired, to form an address, fitted to meet the eye of a superlatively learned woman.

"Oh! by the crown of genius! and by every quill in the mob of literature!" exclaimed Lord Bayswater; "but that manuscript you have drawn from its envelope, Miss Frederick, I prophesy to be a duodecimo volume of an essay upon accomplishments, about to be dedicated to you, and sent for your inspection."

"Rather an essay upon '*nescience*,'"

said Rosa, smiling—"if to be inscribed to me."

"I'll wager it to be a sentimental novel, and that I am to be honoured with its dedication," cried Mary Lorrain.

"I pronounce it a trial of patience, and rejoice she did not put the cause into my hand," exclaimed the admiral.

"Yet, you perceive, it is not a brief," said Lord Flowerdew.

"But *I* pronounce, it will come before your lordship for judgment," said Lady Flowerdew, "if I augur correctly, from the sort of smile that plays round the mouth of the favoured correspondent, as she reads."

"And, if it does not," said Major Arundel, "I will take upon myself the responsibility of predicting, that the fair writer will be grievously disappointed."

The rest of the party now had each their conjecture to communicate upon the subject of Miss Delvely's manuscript; and, at length, upon perceiving the eyes of the smiling Rosa glancing towards the con-

clusion of the most welcome page of this profuse correspondent's billet, Lady Meliora eagerly exclaimed—

"Come, Rosa, dear, take pity on the acute sufferings of painful curiosity, and proclaim the title of this volume."

"*Veneered* Accomplishments:" said Rosa, smiling, "or Acquirements displayed."

"Disseminate the art, without delay," said Lady Flowerdew; "for no doubt the fair writer compiled her volume for public inspection; and you cannot be so unkind as not to aid in obtaining for her the applause she anticipates."

"Why," replied our heroine, "I must feel conviction, that in making the accomplished Flora's pages public, I only meet her wishes; since to my ignorance she has addressed incomprehensibilities, she doubts not I must apply to the better informed for the solution of:—for beside her prodigality in German, Spanish, Italian, and French quotations—she has bewildered me through five cruel pages upon classic ground; from whence she whirls me into

the *Louvre*, to excite my envy, by announcing how her taste for painting and sculpture was there miraculously formed, at the early age of four years; when her grandfather took her to Paris, in the last month of the short peace of Amiens; and after confessing her passion for the Apollo of Belvidere, as the cause of her twice obtaining a gold medal for her copies of it, she hies with me off into a wild soar through the regions of heathen mythology; and just as she has prepared me for a long rest upon the very pinnacle of Mount Parnassus, she suddenly, taking the lyre of her favourite Apollo in hand, precipitates me into a pursuit of Orpheus, through the lower regions; and after a pathetic chord, struck as a dirge for the fate of Eurydice, she composedly seats herself upon a dolphin's back, to solicit me, in the fascinating strains of Arion, 'to favour her with the names of the most celebrated of the Irish melodies.' "

"Then, by the spokes of Aurora's chariot wheels, and the axle-tree of bright Phœbus!" exclaimed Lord William, "let

us all swear to mount Pegasus for her sake; and each, in our own way, to have a kick at her."

"By all that is coercive in poetic justice, but I envy you that brilliant *jeu d'esprit*," cried Lord Bayswater; "and I'll mount without delay:—but first let us find inspiration for our satiric propensities, by wading through the specimens of accomplishments, which have been so playfully epitomized for us."

Lord Bayswater now took the voluminous billet, and read it aloud, for the purpose of convulsing his auditors with risibility, through his comic style of giving to their ears the elaborate display of the self satisfied Flora's acquirements.

"This young lady," said Lord Flowerdew, the moment his brother peer arrived at the signature, "this accomplished egotist, really evinces so retentive a faculty, in flirting through the epitomized literature of the juvenile libraries, that I absolutely think, had she attempted half a dozen solid acquirements, she possibly might have attained a couple of them."

"But, alas!" said Rosa, "the messenger waits for a reply; which my attainments can never accomplish. Dear Lady Flowerdew, what can I do?"

"Copy out a few pages of the Encyclopædia Britannica," said the admiral; "and send them to her, as a Rowland for her Oliver."

"No bad thought," responded Lord Flowerdew; "but I rather pronounce mine a better; as I trust it may proye a *quietus* to the young lady's displaying vanity. Come, Bayswater, you, who by your bantering propensities this morning elicited this treat for Miss Frederick, must take the trouble off her hands in answering it:—but do it as the most inveterate *bas bleu* in existence; and be sure to impress all the dead languages in battle array into your lines, to combat and bear down her modern auxiliaries."

"But not surely in my name, Lord Flowerdew," exclaimed the alarmed Rosabella.

"Fear not, Miss Frederick," replied Lord Bayswater, with impressive serious-

ness, "that I would fabricate any thing supposed to come from your pen, that you could feel reluctance to put your name to."

"Come, do not be fastidious, child," said Lady Meliora; "remember the good Lord Flowerdew hopes to effect by this project; and that as you are merely a bird of passage, it matters little what opinions are formed of you."

"True," replied our heroine; "and upon these recollections, I will consent to commit myself, as this inveterate *bas bleu*, to scare young ladies from vanity's displays."

The party now adjourned to Lord Flowerdew's library, where from the stores of profound classic knowledge the two peers and Major Arundel possessed, aided by Admiral Oakbury's proficiency in oriental languages, a concise reply was fabricated for Rosa to copy; and although into it were introduced quotations, which bore testimony of the most profound learning, yet, in the composition, Lord Bayswater forgot his passion for "making

sport withal," in the more powerful one he had conceived for Rosa; and awake only to the recollections that it was for her he wrote, he formed it into the elegant reply of a refined as well as favourite votary of literary acquirements.

This Babylonian composition, of various languages, in which the aid of Miss Delvely was requested upon the etymology of a Syriac word, and the definition of a Hebrew one, was quickly dispatched to the impatient Flora;—and so far accomplished Lord Flowerdew's hoped-for effect, it sent her to her chamber, to conceal her tears of mortification, and promptly consigned her to her pillow with the aching head and heart of wounded vanity; where she judiciously formed the determination never again so heedlessly to commit herself; and to keep her own attainments to herself, until quite assured where they could blaze forth without apprehension of finding such humiliating superiority.

Unfortunate for the projects of Lady Meliora of captivating Major Arundel, and drawing the admiration of Lord Bayswater

to herself, proved the arrival of Nancy Mahon at Lord Flowerdew's; for the latter, it had hurried on from temperate admiration to the most enthusiastic passion; and on the former, whilst the influence of her affectations was operating in counteraction to the magic of her beauty, the information so accidentally conveyed, of her apathy to the distresses of her fellow beings, awakened a potent power against her, almost too formidable for overthrow. This unexpected intimation of a defect in the moral excellence of Lady Meliora, filled his bosom with a degree of inquietude, that told him unequivocally, how near a precipice he had unwarily permitted fancy to lead him. But at length, with a fervent wish that the heart of the mentally perfect Rosa might be found, by closer observation, still in her own power to bestow, Major Arundel descended to the drawing room from his dinner toilet; and in full conviction, that since Lady Meliora's enchanting beauty, so clouded, could no longer impede the influence of his judgment, if he determinately set about

the effort, he should accede to his uncle Oakbury's earnest wish, in becoming the serious, unalienable captive of Miss Frederick.

But this arrangement for a prompt transfer of an undivided heart seemed threatened with much impeding influence, by the dazzling charms of Lady Meliora's aspect, on this day most becomingly attired, and now rapidly advancing in the recovery of her brilliancy of bloom and animation; yet the fascinations of our heroine's sympathy for Nancy Mahon, with the eulogium passed in the simple eloquence of that young woman's gratitude, were eagerly pressed upon his memory by his watchful judgment, and sent him to seek a seat by Rosabella, to whom he now determined to speak at once of Mr. Monson—the individual whom his apprehension pointed out as a probable rival—and from his observations, as he made him their theme, to discover if his wishes relative to her were doomed to meet a disappointment.

In compliance with his determination,

Major Arundel asked our heroine, if she could possibly inform him of the cause of Mr. Monson's late apparent wish to shun him.

The astonishment of Rosabella occasioned so bright a suffusion upon her cheeks, that Major Arundel entertained but little doubt of the suspicions he had formed of attachment between her and Charles Monson.

But although Rosa's surprise had awakened this blush, and caused a momentary suspension to her reply, she soon rallied her faculties, to express the astonishment this question had excited.

"Do not feel offended or hurt at his avoidance of you," she added, after a pause; "for, believe me, his wish for your friendship is not diminished, although—" and here Rosa abruptly broke off her intended sentence, on the sudden recollection of the impropriety of giving utterance to any thing to awaken suspicion of Charles having cause for shunning any of his friends; and after a moment of anxiety, for means to extricate herself from this

embarrassment, she rather hesitatingly continued—

"Although I very well know his opinion of you is unchanged, it is wholly impossible for me to undertake accounting for the caprices of young gentlemen,—any more than of young ladies."

It was now clear to the conviction of Major Arundel, from the blushes and embarrassment of Rosa, that her affections were Mr. Monson's, and her pensiveness caused by the disapprobation of Lady Derville to the attachment; and although thus convinced he must relinquish every hope for himself, yet the powerful interest he had even from their first interview felt for her was not diminished by his disappointment; and now, his sympathy awakened for her menaced happiness through unpropitious love, he continued by her side conversing earnestly with her, in the tender tones that pity had awakened.

Neither the earnest attention, nor the softened tone of Arundel's voice to Rosa, escaped the anxious observation of Lady Meliora and Lord Bayswater, who both

were panic-struck by them, as militating against their own respective designs; for, in the true essence of inordinate vanity, her ladyship became almost wild with despair, at the possibility of losing her determined conquest,—whilst his lordship, in equal despair, believed another had commenced that very siege he had descended from his toilet fully resolved to undertake; and when the dinner summons called them to the festive board, both manœuvred to obtain a place by those they meditated to subdue, but only Lord Bayswater secured the seat his wishes aimed at, for Lady Meliora was defeated.

CHAPTER III.

At table our heroine was seated between Lord Bayswater and Major Arundel, and exactly opposite to them was placed Lady Meliora, Lord William, and Miss Lorrain. But now the assiduities of Lord William lost every charm, and every particle of consolation for the disappointed object of his pursuit; who, during the interval devoted to the change of courses, began to feel conviction, that a clouded brow and suspended smile were unlikely to attract those coveted admirers from her friend; and therefore with the first dish of the second spreading of the viands of luxury appeared her renovated good humour, which she now determined should ebulliate in wit and playfulness. But wit and vivacity performed by palpable vanity and affectation are ill calculated to fascinate; and all that Lady Meliora obtained by this

effort to allure, was for Major Arundel to rejoice more firmly in not having allowed his dazzled fancy to mislead his heart; and Lord Bayswater to feel amazement at how the enchanting Rosa had escaped the contagion of all that thus obscured the real charms of Lady Meliora Monson.

At length the dessert was laid upon the table; and after Lord William had made various efforts to help Lady Meliora to some portion of it, which in her determined display of sparkling vivacity she had rejected as impeding barriers, his lordship to his mortification perceived his last successless offer excite an arch smile from Lord Bayswater, when he rather peevishly said—

"You smile at perceiving all my offerings rejected; and so, Bazey, my wary fellow, my ill success has, *I* also perceive, caused your inattention to your fair neighbour, whom you have not yet tempted with this most tempting dessert."

"I hope your offerings, Bayswater, may prove more successful than my nephew's,"

said Lord Flowerdew, with an expressive smile.

"So I sincerely hope too, my lord," replied Lord Bayswater, blushing; and who, through the resistless impulse of his fancy, placed four strawberry leaves, forming in part an earl's coronet, upon a plate, which with a playful air he presented to Rosabella.

Rosa, whose vanity was not her expounding auxiliary upon the occasion—perceived not the poet's figurative fancy, and with genuine *naïveté* returned the plate, as with responding playfulness she said—

"I wish for a more fruitful offering, my lord,—something more substantial. This plate contains merely decorating foliage."

Instantly Lord Bayswater poured out a glass of water, and taking some bay leaves from an approximate garnish, laid all, with an anxious look and tremulous hand, upon the plate which Rosa held: to whose conviction this sportive emblem now stood unveiled; and who, whilst she blushed, joined in the almost universal laugh,

at the prompt offering made at her desire, although perfectly unconscious of any thing in the nature of seriousness being meant by this mirthful gallantry. But there were those present who possessed more lively apprehension upon the occasion; and while she was assailed from all sides by showers of raillery's arrows, for her ingenious method of begging the question, all mirth was suddenly and most unexpectedly suspended — Claudia Lorrain had fainted.

Not an individual present, but Lady Flowerdew and Mary, cherished even the shadow of a suspicion relative to the cause of Claudia's swoon; yet every one flew to offer or afford aid for her recovery,—more particularly Lord Bayswater, in whose estimation she highly stood, as one of the most interesting as well as amiable and accomplished amongst women; when Mary Lorrain, in the impetuosity of her keenly wounded feelings, injudiciously for the delicate secret of her sister, with marked vehemence repulsed his assiduous efforts to be of use. In doing this she elicited

a suspicion of the fact in his lordship's mind, which, although flatteringly grateful to his vanity, inflicted a deeply felt pang of regret and compunction, which he had never experienced on any similar triumph; because though he could not endure the idea of Miss Lorrain suffering, and, well knowing the tenderness of her susceptibility, trembled at the effect of inauspicious love upon her,—yet he could not even in the cause of humanity relinquish the beautiful and enchanting Rosabella to restore her peace.

Whilst all these feelings, awakened by the imprudence of Mary, were rapidly agitating the bosom of Lord Bayswater, Lady Flowerdew, proclaiming the indisposition of Claudia to have been threatening her the whole day, had her removed from public observation to her own chamber; where remaining with her until her recovery was effected, her ladyship returned to the circle she had quitted, full of deep regret at having suffered the captivating Lord Bayswater to be so much in the society of the too susceptible Claudia;

and at his lordship having been invited to encounter the resistless Rosabella on her present visit.

At length the moment in which Lady Flowerdew considered it time for the ladies to withdraw arrived; and after every inquiry was kindly made by all, for Miss Lorrain and the still slumbering Nancy, as the evening was uncommonly inviting, they strolled and wandered through the extensive conservatory, the adjoining greenhouses, and all the alluring spots of fragrant attraction approximate to the house.

It was in one of the rambles through these regions of perfumes and natural beauties, that Lady Meliora and Rosa, inadvertently deviating from the course of their companions, lost them; which on her ladyship perceiving, then under the inspirations of her disappointed vanity, she in a tone expressive of her irritated feelings, exclaimed—

"Pray, Miss Frederick, is it *that* emperor's intoxicating admiration, which has spirited you up to become such a palpable coquette? I have frequently heard Mrs.

O'Dowd pronounce *still flirts* as the most mischievous; and, upon my word, I begin to think you are a perfect illustration of the fact."

"Coquette and flirt!!!" repeated Rosa, in accents of wounded feeling and astonishment. "Pray, may I ask, what proofs have I given of my being indeed an illustration of so amiable a combination?"

"Proofs, pretty Innocent! Why, in your determined flirtation with *that* stupid Arundel; and in your indefatigable coquetry with that vain, as silly peer."

"I cannot, from retrospection of my conduct, plead guilty to these formidable charges," said Rosa. "Nothing transpired on either side, in any dialogue I ever held with Major Arundel, that could be twined into the form of flirtation; and although his ill health, and the attractive sweetness of his manners, have interested me, even from our first interview, most powerfully; yet the wish or idea of flirting with him never entered my imagination, although the wish of gaining his esteem, I frankly acknowledge,

was formed both by my heart and reason on our voyage from Ireland:—whilst, as to the male coquette Lord Bayswater—"

"Ay, Lord Bayswater!" cried Lady Meliora, with a sneer; "Lord Bayswater—"

"Is in court, to answer the call of Lady Meliora Monson, which he is so honoured by," exclaimed his lordship, emerging from a screen of orange trees, which, until that moment, had obscured his approach and Major Arundel's from the observation of these young friends, whose amity their conduct at dinner threatened with suspension; but whom their presence now must for the sake of appearances promptly reconcile.

Rosa had been only hurt by the unkind, as unfounded accusations of her friend; her serenity was therefore instantly restored: but as the discomposure of her ladyship had been formed by an assemblage of passions, the tranquillizing her tones, aspect, and agitation, could not rapidly be achieved. Her first impulse was therefore to fly from observation; but

her next was to lure away *that stupid* Arundel; that in a *tête à tête* she might exert her powers for the subjugation of his heart; and with all the expert management of a manœuvrer of the world of experience, she changed her meditated route to the path in which Major Arundel was advancing, and in a tone of attractive playfulness, and a mouth adorned with dimpled smiles, she exclaimed—

"After the figurative offering at the dessert of this day, neither you nor I, major, can in possibility remain to impede a *tête à tête*, which we may presume must be wished for by his lordship."

Arundel, although firmly convinced Lord Bayswater had as little chance as himself of success, in a heart devoted to Mr. Monson, was neither pleased at being prevented from joining the interesting Rosa, nor at the little consideration for the delicacy of her friend, this manner of flying away from her evinced; he yet accompanied Lady Meliora, to be taught still more—whilst he felt still more the magic of her beauty—to lament the

deforming influence of her glaring vanity.

This *tête à tête*, so auspicious to his views, so unexpected to his hopes, Lord Bayswater determined to avail himself of, instantly to terminate his torturing state of incertitude; and perceiving Rosabella was hastily bending her footsteps after her fugitive friend, he entreated one moment's stay, to honour him with a private conference; when, with all the trembling hopes and fears that ardent honourable love inspired, his lordship confessed his passion, and offered in seriousness his coronet once more to the portionless Rosa; who, in her astonishment at an offering so wholly unexpected—so highly gratifying to her vanity, lost not for one moment her susceptibility to the pity and gratitude this flattering suit awakened; and whilst roseate blushes mantled her cheeks, and her heart painfully throbbed at the ungracious task she was called upon to perform, she hastened, with every palliating delicacy of language, to terminate his lordship's hopes and his addresses. And as, even

to his entreaty, that she would postpone her decided rejection of him, until he strove by every tender assiduity to remove, if possible, her reluctance to their union, she pronounced a firm negative; Lord Bayswater retreated from this inauspicious conference, in the full belief that her heart must be in the possession of another; or she, in her dependent situation, without even a legitimate claim to a place in society, would never have rejected such an elevating offer: and now, almost as much mortified at having subjected himself to a possible refusal, as he was heart-wrung at receiving it, he determined on instant flight; and precipitately ordering his horses, he sought Lady Flowerdew, whom he cautiously whispered, as he fervently pressed her hand—

"I have been playing the part of a d—lish idiot. The first offer of my liberty I was ever tempted to make has been rejected; therefore I am off to the Continent, and if you have any commands for Paris, send them to Burlington Street. I shall set out to-morrow evening. Hea-

ven bless *you*, and send *me* back heart-whole!"

Lady Flowerdew's affection for Miss Lorrain caused her to rejoice this offer had been made, since it was rejected; for whilst indecision, with hopes and fears, impeded the way of poor Claudia, she stood no chance: now all were terminated, and having once meditated upon the resignation of his liberty, she thought it not impossible but he might think of connubial bliss once more; and in his first love, kindled by beauty's influence, disappointed, she considered it most probable, the feelings of that disappointment might direct the next arrow of Cupid from the ambush of unsuspecting esteem, through the magic lures of refined information and attractive accomplishments.

The absence of Lord Bayswater was no sooner observed, than accounted for by Lady Flowerdew under a plausible form; and whilst Lady Meliora was pouring the consolation into her own wound of disappointment, at the loss of this coveted captive, in Rosabella's equal disappoint-

ment, Lady Flowerdew conveyed—as more news to amuse her dear Claudia—the information of Lord Bayswater's rejection, and consequent departure.

The secretary of Lord Flowerdew returned as speedily as possible, with intelligence, that in the —— regiment of infantry there were two privates, whose names were so very nearly similar that there was scarcely avoiding error between them:—one, Cornelius Mahon reported killed in the *sortie* of the enemy on the 14th of April, at Bayonne; the other, *Corneille* Mahon, reported severely wounded, but in the hospital and doing favourably. As Rosa could to an absolute certainty pronounce the latter name as being that of the husband of poor Nancy, to her was deputed the task of conveying this intelligence, with assurances, "that if she determined upon the fatigue and hazard of proceeding to Bayonne, where yet, although his wound had been favourably reported, cruel disappointment might await her, that she should be provided with every means to make

her journey and voyage as little inconvenient as possible; and that if she would spare herself the additional fatigue and anxiety of making her babe the companion of her way, and confide him, as he was weaned, to the protection of Lady Flowerdew, she might rest assured, that every tender and unremitting care would be taken of him."

This task could not have been delegated to a more competent agent; for Rosa imparted the communication she had to convey, without oversetting poor Nancy by the tide of unexpected joy; neither did she make the fears, that reason suggested, too painful in their counterpoise to the hopes presented to this tenderly attached wife; and, as all her susceptibilities were of the most acute nature, her gratitude was lit by a glowing spark of its animated fire; and with every expression that could touch the hearts of her benefactors, and convince them her sensibility of their goodness was genuine, she implored that their benevolence might permit her to set out without delay; and if they advised,

she would forego the maternal delight of bearing her child with her, to cheer poor Corny's bed of suffering, should she find him living; and should she not, to cheer and console her, and to teach her for his hapless sake to bear the decrees of Heaven with Christian resignation. As she made this promise of compliance with the wishes of her benefactors, she gazed on her child with a thrilling look of anguished regret, and wept so bitterly, that Rosabella, quite subdued by sympathy, reported all so faithfully in the drawing room, that Admiral Oakbury's benevolent feelings were worked up to such a tone of enthusiasm, he vehemently declared she should not be separated from her child—

"No, poor afflicted young creature, she shall not," he said, "since you know her to be good, Miss Frederick, and that she has incontestably evinced herself an affectionate faithful wife. She shall not give up the comfort of her child's consoling presence in her anxious voyage of uncertainty; and to make his accom-

panying her easy, she shall go from Hampshire in my own yacht—which has visited the Bay of Biscay before now:—and I will send Ben Prow and his wife to take every care of her and her brat; and to convey her safely to the pillow of her brave husband; and, in case calamity should there await her, to bring her back to my house in the Isle of Wight, there to remain until subdued sorrow permits her returning to her widowed home."

Rosa, who, from the first moment of her introduction to Admiral Oakbury, had felt a reverential esteem for him, which his kindness to herself had promptly excited, now as his beneficence drew tears of approving sensibility to her eyes, almost longed to kiss his venerable cheek in gratitude for Nancy, to whom she eagerly flew, to cheer with this new arrangement of benevolence; and as she retired with her lovely countenance irradiated with all the animated feelings which glowed in her susceptible bosom, Lord Flowerdew could not but exclaim—

"How appropriate is the messenger

your benevolence has found! She is, indeed, most genial to her mission."

"She looks and acts like Pity's own ministrant seraph," said Major Arundel.

"Ay," exclaimed the admiral, "give me a great niece like that, my brave boy, and I care not how soon I dance at your wedding."

CHAPTER IV.

On the subsequent morning, Nancy Mahon, enriched by the bounty of the benevolent hands she had fallen into, was, with her child, sent off at an early hour to Admiral Oakbury's seat in Hampshire, consigned to the care of his boatswain, to whom she was the bearer of orders for her voyage to Bayonne; and, upon the arrival of Lady Derville's equipage, Lady Meliora and our heroine set out on their return to town; neither in animated spirits, for in no one point had her ladyship's vanity met its expected gratification on this visit; while Rosa had met with nothing at Lord Flowerdew's to cheer the depression under which she had left town; for she was too innately compassionate, not to grieve more for the pain inflicted on Lord Bayswater by inauspicious love, than to exult at the triumph of her charms. Admiral Oakbury and his nephew, she

had just heard, were going into Wales; and, independent of her own regret at seeing them no more, she felt sorrow at the departure of Major Arundel, upon Mr. Monson's account. Sympathy too, for her favourite Nancy Mahon, added its saddening ray to cloud her cheerfulness; but above all that had occurred during this short visit to wound her feelings, was the inattractive form her beloved Meliora had appeared in; whom, —although always too much under the dominion of vanity, to display herself as a perfectly natural character,—she had never seen so completely transformed by affectation from all her inherent fascinations; and thus dispirited, they sat by each other for some time, equally pensive, silent, and sad.

At length the reflections of Lady Meliora, which were those precisely to increase the malady she was smarting from, having wound her up into a state of irritation that could no longer bear her through, without evincing itself in oral petulance; and as there was no witness

to impede her, Betty having chosen to mount the box with Terry, she sneeringly demanded—

"Which of Miss Frederick's two late conquests she was pining after, that made her so cheerless a companion?"

"Which of my two!" responded Rosa, blushing,—who although thrown a little out of her self-possession by the unexpectedness of the question, determined to give her no clew to the honour Lord Bayswater had distinguished her by; well aware, that if her rejection of his lordship came to the knowledge of her beloved protectress, it would only augment her painful suspicions and alarms relative to her grandson. "Which, Lady Frances or Lord Belford?"

"Ay, I forgot them; therefore you were perfectly right to remind me that yours is universal conquest:—but it was not those juveniles I thought of. No, child, I alluded to *that* stupid Major Arundel, who has completely lost all his charms, and all his interest, now he is no longer at the point of death; and that self-sufficient

coxcomb Lord Bayswater, who has been cruel enough to do every thing in his power to delude you into a belief of his being expiring for you; and as soon as he conceived the poor goose was caught in his toils, he mounted his horse and galloped off to the echo of his own laughter at his humane prank. For my part, he had just sense sufficient to perceive I had too much spirit, too much pride, and too much penetration, to be wiled by him into pastime for his inordinate vanity; and therefore he attempted no useless adulation to me."

Rosa now became still more resolute in her determination of not betraying the unequivocal offer his lordship had made her, since seeing and pitying—whilst she sighed at its dark shade to perfection—the malady her friend was at that moment diseased with, she would not increase it bv such information.

At this very moment, in which Lady Meliora had only just ceased giving utterance to the asperities of her writhing vanity, with correspondent tones and elo-

quence of countenance, the voice of Captain Hawk electrified her at the side of the carriage, which being open, his auricular and ocular observation were consequently unimpeded.

The apprehension of Lady Meliora at the possibility of her having been seen in so disadvantageous a moment now overwhelmed her with such evident confusion —betrayed by alternate flush and blanch of cheek, by faltering voice, and embarrassment of manner, that even a less vain man than this might naturally have construed all as symptoms of more than common feeling for him; therefore Captain Hawk, having no contemptible opinion of his own fascinations, calculated upon this confusion as most auspicious to his wishes; and now, throwing much more of the seductive softness of the tender passion than he really felt for her, into the expression of his eyes and his studiously dulcet tones, he addressed her ladyship as if he was almost completely subdued by rapture, at so unexpectedly finding his hoped for transport of meeting her so happily anti-

cipated, as he was on his way to Lord Flowerdew's for the express purpose of seeing her.

"For," he added, "I procured my leave of absence solely for the purpose of flying up to town, to satisfy my painful anxiety, by ocular demonstration, of how you were after your direful illness."

Lady Meliora blushed, and looked pleased—for her vanity was pleased. A long pause ensued, which the noble captain by no means construed to his disadvantage; but, at length, with a suppliant air, he said—

"I am about to take a great liberty with you, Lady Meliora.—Will you permit me to send my horse into town by my groom, and allow me the honour of returning in the carriage with you?"

Lady Meliora uttered her assent most graciously; whilst Rosabella blushed with alarm, in firm belief that acquiescence in this intrusion was not correct.

Captain Hawk instantly sprung off his horse into the carriage, and placed himself opposite to the beautiful Meliora, care-

fully to evince to her what rapture it afforded him to gaze upon her.

"Pray, may I ask," demanded her ladyship, with a half conscious smile, "how you came to think of following me to Lord Flowerdew's? or, rather, how you came to know of my being there?"

"Your amendment is correct," the captain replied, with a tender smile, in judicious display of his handsome teeth; "for it must be, how I came to know of your being at Wimbledon, you wish to learn; since why I came to follow you, you cannot but divine. My intelligence I had from my good friend Dashwood."

"Is Mr. Dashwood a friend of yours, Captain Hawk?" said Lady Meliora.

"Yes, a most devoted one; and so, faith, ought he: for, when I was first embarking for the Peninsula, he was in my service, and"——

"*The* service, you mean," exclaimed her ladyship, in alarm.

"No, in my service. Dashwood was never a soldier; so, the gentleman not choosing to bronze his fair complexion

in the unshaded field of warfare, I procured him his present situation with Lord John Rentlorn, an elder brother of Lord William; who, although completely done up by his losses on the turf, and by the extravagance of his wife—who, by the way, the moment she found her *caro sposo's* ruin was sealed, handsomely left him; no longer to augment his expenses, and to patch him up with damage thousands—— but, although I say Lord John is a ruined man, he has been an excellent master to Dashwood, having put many a cool fifty into his pocket by his instructions on the turf, &c. So, when I called at the Marquis of Timberdown's to inquire for my friend William, Dashwood with an air of conspicuous exultation informed me he was gone on a visit to his uncle, to be in the same house with you—for, *entre nous*, it was the speculating Mr. Dashy, who *sent* Lord William on the *scent* of procuring an introduction to your ladyship."

"How!" exclaimed Lady Meliora, in a tone of alarmed vanity, shuddering at the idea of her fortune operating on Lord

William; and, if so, as possibly on Captain Hawk himself.

"Why, as it is no secret, I may state, that my friend William has been a little imprudent, and therefore cannot, like myself and other more fortunate men, marry from disinterested motives—for he must have a certain portion of this world's good with his consort: so *Dashy*, being a prodigiously smart fellow, who makes desperate havoc amongst the hearts of the fair Abigails of the day, having, by means of his convenient flirtations, famous opportunities of much private family information—which he knows how to dispose of to the best advantage—has long been retained as Lord William's intelligencer upon matrimonial speculation; and, by the trump of fame, hearing of your ladyship, he communicated to my friend William, that an immense fortune was arrived from Ireland, with the pleasing addition—of more beauty than ever before fell to the lot of mortal."

"Well," exclaimed her ladyship, conceitedly, whilst her cheeks betrayed the

tint of indignant alarm, lest her conquests had been achieved by golden arrows—"Well, and when you received ocular proof of the exaggeration of one statement, you took mental conviction of the hyperbole of the other."

"Ocular demonstration could only occasion implicit confidence in the authority of Mr. Dashwood's report," said Captain Hawk: "but his exaggeration, on the other point, was corrected by Lady Flowerdew: yet that, your ladyship sees, has not cooled the ardor of Lord William's passion; and I can guarantee it could not, since yours are the coveted riches—'which nature's own sweet and cunning hand' endowed you with."

"Ah!" thought Rosa, "and such is the flattery that *art's* own *deep* and cunning hand lays on." Whilst Lady Meliora, now in the altitude of her vanity's gratification, playfully warbled forth—

"My face is my fortune, sir, she said."

This sportive sally of her ladyship's called forth respondent gaiety from Cap-

tain Hawk; and, to the infinite surprise and vexation of Rosabella, who was left to perform a mute observer on the occasion, she perceived the professed adorer of Lord Montalbert carrying on a decided flirtation of very serious tendency with another man, who scrupled not, even before her, in playful affirmation, to declare himself her ladyship's most passionate lover, and, to her further amaze and regret, when, at length, the coach stopped in Sloane Street, Lady Meliora invited this aspiring man to alight, and join their *en famille* party for the day.

"Perhaps, if I indulge myself," said Captain Hawk, with a little becoming hesitation," *it* may not prove agreeable to Lady Derville."

"Every thing that is agreeable to me is so to her," she replied; "therefore, set your alarms on this subject at rest."

Thus assured of every favourable reception, Captain Hawk, now borne in air on hope's expanded wings, followed her, who, untutored in the world's usages, and totally ignorant of the code of honour's laws

established for love and courtship, believed all men who bowed at her shrine were to become the abject slaves of her caprices, and to be encouraged, or otherwise, in their submissive thraldom, just as her varying fancy should decree; nor once bestowed a thought upon the possibilities that might destroy for ever the peace of a deserving—devoted suitor, or point a pistol at the bosom of a brother, to atone for her deluding pastime.

Captain Hawk found, from his gracious reception, that Lady Meliora well knew what regulated her grandmother's favour; since now Lady Derville, having learned through various channels the perils of the water party, and that she was indebted to Captain Hawk for the preservation of her idol, received him with all the gratitude her heart was full of; and which experienced no chill through any apprehension of his presuming to aim at the heart of her grandaughter, since that was safe, and irrevocably in the possession of Lord Montalbert.

Lady Derville's reception of Rosabella

wore the gratifying affection of former times; whilst, to her high indignation, Mr. Sternham's wore the assuming aspect of sanctioned love, through the wily policy of impressing every one with a belief, that he would be an ill used man, did she not ultimately accept him.

However cheered and flattered Lady Meliora found herself by the adulation of Captain Hawk, she yet felt the rankling wounds of mortified vanity so painful in her bosom, that she could not resist their influence, and, with a sarcastic smile, she exclaimed—

"I am grieved to prove the messenger of evil tidings to you, Mr. Sternham; but, I assure you, Miss Frederick will no longer submit to your addresses. No, ambition's spark has been kindled in her bosom, and she aims now at coronets, and presumptive heirs to coronets."

Rosa looked on Lady Meliora steadfastly, and, with her mildly eloquent eyes, demanded—"What all this meant?"—her ladyship blushed, in consciousness; and, anxious to withdraw from such embarrass-

ing scrutiny, hastily turning to her grandmother, inquired for her brothers, and the O'Dowds.

"The O'Dowds dine here, my dear," she replied; "Lord Derville finds existence only in Bryanstone Square; whilst Mr. Monson, inveigled by his new friends upon an extent of tour, I have been taught not to expect the honour of seeing for ten days longer."

Rosabella blanched to the lily's hue at this intelligence, since she augured from it nothing but evil for Charles; and this change of complexion, observed by Lady Meliora, awakened, for the first time, a suspicion, that her brother was beloved by Rosa; and her bosom was gladdened by this suspicion, since she doubted not the devotion of her heart to this attachment would soon lead Rosa to leave the field of universal conquest undisputed to her. Through this belief her asperities were lulled—and, with an arch glance of accusation, she chased our heroine from the room, who was too unhappy upon Mr. Monson's account, either to parry raillery

or endure it; for her conscience was not at peace at knowing all she did, and contriving nothing to extricate him from the evils—whatever they might be—which encompassed him. Yet, of herself, she could do nothing, nor knew she any individual to whom she could feel herself at liberty to disclose the little he had betrayed to her; and when, in the solitude of her chamber, she meditated upon the painful subject, she saw no step for her to take but to implore Charles by letter—since their last interview convinced her of the impropriety of attempting any personal discussion of any thing so interesting with him—to confide in Captain O'Dowd or Major Arundel, and not unadvisedly to precipitate himself into the vortex of irremediable ruin.

This determination of offering her advice by letter, the moment she could find the power of having it delivered to Mr. Monson, now led her thoughts to other letters; and, with an anxious and palpitating heart, she made inquiry if any had arrived for her during her absence: since she had begun

to think it very strange that no communication had been made to her, either through Mr. Trench or Captain Gore, of Egremont; and, after all that had occurred, she thought both honor and propriety demanded such intelligence should be conveyed to her, that she might not continue her affections bound in a vain attachment. Besides, even common urbanity called for a reply to the letter she had addressed to Mrs. Gore upon her arrival in London, and fully sufficient time had elapsed to sanction her expectation of one; and this uncourteous and mysterious silence of all these parties now only added to the painful disquietude of her bosom.

The arts of Captain Hawk to obtain the woman he admired, and the fortune he coveted, were so subtly drawn, that, whilst his profound homage was clearly perceptible to the grandaughter, it was wholly obscured from the grandmother and her chaplain. — Even from Captain and Mrs. O'Dowd it was carefully concealed; and, so well did he play his part of render-

ing himself agreeable to them, that they cordially invited him, not only to make one of their guests at a dinner, to be given by them the following day to Miss Vandelure, in compliment to Lord Derville, but to domesticate with them as often as he pleased during their mutual residence at Freecastle's.

CHAPTER V.

To this dinner party of the O'Dowds Lord and Lady Flowerdew had been invited, but a prior engagement led them to decline it. Sir Gilbert and Lady Wilemore, and the Standard of Perfection, were able, as they were willing, to attend; and, when they arrived—with all due forms of apology for such a liberty of intrusion, they introduced two nephews of her ladyship's, one the Captain Standard already mentioned, the other, a younger brother of his, a lately liberated prisoner from France, a lieutenant in the navy, and, like his brother, in expectation of a reduction to half-pay. He was instructed by his wily aunt to fall desperately in love with Lady Meliora Monson, under compact with his brother, for each to try their good fortune with her ladyship, and, after a persevering siege of a fortnight, the least likely to meet success in the speculation

was to withdraw from the pursuit, to follow some other promising game, that their good aunt would by that time have started for them.

Thus instructed, and thus resolved, the two young warriors arrived in Albemarle Street, where Captain Standard performed love in rapid advance, and Mr. Edward Standard all the symptoms of love at first sight, to such a miracle, that Lady Meliora was in ecstasies of delight; for she now monopolized all the homage, save what was very patiently spared to Miss Vandelure from her brother, and to Rosabella from her despised and abominated preceptor; for even the sycophantic Mr. Foxcraft was the adulator of her charms.

In the train of Miss Vandelure to this dinner party, besides Mrs. Allworthy, were her two particular friends, Miss Jones and Miss Acres. Miss Jones, having that morning finally arranged an elopement with a profligate son of Mrs. Allworthy's, cared little for the attention of other beaux; but not so resigned was Miss

Acres, for she was almost as infuriated at Lady Meliora's monopoly of admiration, as she had been the day of their narrowly escaped submersion at the parsimony of her brother; and she pouted and scolded so much at the stupidity of the party, and expressed her wonder so audibly—"at what people could mean, by hauling people out of their own comfortable houses, or from their own pursuits, to regale them with falling asleep, or getting lock-jaws," that Mrs. Allworthy was repeatedly compelled to remind her, "that, if she was not less audible in her murmurs, she would offend her kind entertainers, who certainly were not to blame, because the attractions of one of their guests drew off the attention of the beaux they had invited."

But Miss Acres cared not whom she offended; and more than once had the temerity to propose, demurely, to Mrs. O'Dowd, to invite some of the waiters to join their party, as they looked dashing, and might enliven the *ennui* of their circle; and, when the gentlemen rejoined the ladies after dinner, Miss Acres first per-

forming an audible yawn, electrifying to the *politesse* of all present, seized Mr. Sternham (who happened to be striding across the room, to enthrone himself on a vacant seat by Rosabella) around the neck, and to his infinite consternation and dismay, who conceived a paroxysm of an alarming nature was come upon her, whirled him round and round, declaring, "he must, through compassion, waltz with her, to save her from an impending lethargy."

The moment her light project was confessed to the appalled ears of Mr. Sternham, he threw her from him with a degree of indignant violence, that nothing could extenuate; which so enraged the easily irritated young lady, that she vehemently declared, "he had dislocated every joint in her frame," and bursting into an hysteric fit of sobbing, unceremoniously pronounced him "an executioner, accustomed to rack people for confessions, and who had taken refuge in Ireland, after the abolition of the inquisition on the Peninsula." Then suddenly turning to Rosabella, she exclaimed—

"If you marry the savage, you are a dead woman; for he'll make an *auto da fé* of you, for his barbarous pastime, the very first act of compassion you request him to perform. Ay, I see inquisitorial flames flashing through his very eyes."

Rosa, whose recoiling antipathy to this ungenial wooer required no incentive to increase it, had been so shocked and disgusted by his unbecoming, unclerical violence, that she eagerly seized this opportunity of publicly contradicting all that the crafty manœuvring of Mr. Sternham had been indefatigably insinuating through the day, and calmly said—

"Your humanity, Miss Acres, need experience no kind of alarm for my life from Mr. Sternham, since I am under no engagement of the nature you apprehend; and after your kind warning, there can exist no chance in possibility I ever should."

"As I am too giddy-brained already, to increase the vertigo of my poor pericranium, you must excuse my waltzing with you, Miss Acres," exclaimed Mrs.

O'Dowd, gaily; but if you can condescend to the vulgarism of your own national dance, if the customs and pastimes of our now proudly *Great* Britain, are not to be laid aside for those of a degenerate and a conquered people; and if you can be patriotic enough to submit to such a horror, as engaging in a country dance to banish your lethargy, I think we can contrive six or seven couple, as Lady Meliora can only dance with one partner at a time."

"But, ma'am," replied Miss Acres, "my bones are all dislocated: however, I'll try what I can achieve, if you do not intend it for a bear dance;" and here, casting an identifying sarcastic glance at Mr. Sternham, hastily commenced the restoration of her countenance to good humour.

"And as a further specific against lethargic influence, Miss Acres," said Captain O'Dowd, smiling, "ere you have occasion to wish again for the intervention of any of the *whiskerandoed* Ganymedes of Jove Freecastle, to facilitate an enlivening

change of pastimes, I trust two brave messmates of mine may arrive, who were unluckily engaged at dinner, but who promised to join us early in the evening."

Upon Mr. Edward Standard inquiring, if they had been his messmates also, Captain O'Dowd announced them as Captains Duncombe and Neville: when the nephews of Lady Wilemore, well knowing them to be as attractive in appearance as they were heroic in arms, cast a look of condoling alarm on each other.

Musicians being easily procured, the party almost immediately commenced dancing, when to the infinite dismay of Lady Wilemore, she discovered a great error in her generalship; for, by her manœuvring to prevent either of her nephews from obtaining the hand of the portionless Rosabella, she had inadvertently left her to the same advantage she had been contriving for her niece, of falling to the share of one of the expected recruits; but always prompt in rectifying errors, she flew from the set, seized Rosa's hand, and drew her out to take her place

as partner to Captain O'Dowd, declaring, "she would dance with her dear Alinda."

Captain and Mrs. O'Dowd both developing the design of this manœuvre, in sympathetic feeling determined to foil her arts; since in the first place, wishing to make the evening pleasant to the two expected young men, whom they had held out great lures to attract from their dinner party, they had aided in keeping one of their first rate beauties disengaged as a partner for one of them; and in the second, Rosa being high in their estimation, and Mrs. O'Dowd knowing her dependent situation, they had cherished a strong hope, that one of these naval heroes might become her serious captive. Captain O'Dowd therefore flew after Lady Wilemore, declaring he would not relinquish the honour of her hand, without calling Sir Gilbert out to make atonement for her ladyship's mortifying dereliction; whilst Mrs. O'Dowd, with a thousand apologies for her inadvertently accepting a partner whilst Miss Standard was unprovided for, insisted upon making a transfer of Mr.

Foxcraft to her, whilst she should trip it merrily with her friend Rosa; and so well did the O'Dowds execute the management of their counterplot, that they carried their point against all the manœuvring of her subtle ladyship; who, however, as she returned to her station in the merry dance with Captain O'Dowd, had the satisfaction of exclaiming, in affected gaiety—

"My honey was always a sly thing! I hope, my good captain, if you are inclined to jealousy, that you perceive nothing suspicious in this transfer of your wife's partner—now you know the two expected heroes *must*, as a matter of course, select the fair associates."

A very few moments more elapsed ere the two captains entered; when their host inviting them to join in the amusement, they hastened to verify Lady Wilemore's prediction. Captain Duncombe, being a strict observer of all the forms of propriety, did violence to his forcibly attracted fancy, by requesting the honour of Mrs. O'Dowd's hand, but at

the same time securing her interest with her fair friend for the next two dances; whilst Rosa fell to the lot of Captain Neville, who with a smile, as he took his place in the set, said in an audible voice—

"You see, O'Dowd, I preserve my charter. I am the man of luck, you know. Never out of my element, you say."

As Captain Neville uttered this, Mr. Sternham, who had been raging at the unexpected proposition for dancing, since, having always passed his stern censure upon it as a recreation, he could not, in possibility, join in it to secure Rosa himself—precipitately quitted the room.

But this admiration which thus chased Mr. Sternham from the house, with that of Captain Duncombe's conspicuously superadded, proved no source of gratulation to poor Rosabella; since the unequivocal preference these young men gave to her charms, beyond those of any other lady's present—the respectful anxious homage they evinced to her, whilst gratifying to the O'Dowds, came like the sirocco's blight to the never slumbering speculations

of Lady Wilemore for her niece,—awakened the malicious envy of Miss Acres; and we grieve to add, envy too, in a heart where many a lovely blossom of excellence was planted,—but where the noxious weeds of vanity were scattering fast their pernicious germes, even in that of Lady Meliora.

The moment this deplorably vain young woman found there were more conquests worth making, to be thrown in her all-conquering way, those she felt conviction of having secured became comparatively insignificant in her eyes; and her determination was, to add, at the first glance she condescended to turn upon them, these naval heroes to her growing list of hopeless adorers. But every glance of her brilliant eyes, armed with love's potent darts, proved successless; for Rosa monopolized every look and every thought of Captains Duncombe and Neville, even after Lady Wilemore had conveyed to their auricular faculty, that poor pretty simple Miss Frederick was the humble companion of Lady Meliora Monson.

Lady Meliora sustained with fortitude the first engagement of Rosa with Captain Neville, since that was inevitable through existing circumstances; but when she found her the decided choice of even the still handsomer hero Duncombe for the next two dances, and the alternate partner of each as long as they continued engaged under the banners of Terpsichore, that they sat by her at supper, and that she heard Captain Duncombe say to Captain O'Dowd, "that even in Georgia and Circassia he had not beheld beauty to equal Miss Frederick's, nor in any clime manners to fascinate like hers;" her mortification awakened the excruciating pangs of envy in her tortured bosom.

At length, Lady Meliora, unable to sustain the agony of her feelings without betraying the source of their irritation—as a concomitant evil, ever in attendance upon the nurturing of any baleful passion—was compelled to the degrading subterfuge of falsehood for her shield; and whilst dissolved in the tears of discomfited

vanity, she struck the dagger of alarm to the bosom of her adoring grandmother, by announcing herself as extremely ill.

By this judicious intimation her ladyship not only secured her own failings from detection, but achieved the gratifying exploit of terminating for the present the triumphs of Miss Rosabella, by dispersing the party; for her agonized grandmother, on the alarm of indisposition, instantly ordered her carriage, and hurried her idol home, to take refuge in her bed from all the frightful consequences of that fatigue, she doubted not was subduing her darling.

And now, the only remaining balm to the deeply wounded vanity of Lady Melicra arose from the agony of apprehension Captain Hawk displayed, at the idea of illness again assailing her; and with only this sunbeam to cheer her on her way home, she proved no very comfortable companion to her anxious friends; who however, ere they reached Sloane Street, had a suspicion awakened of its being

a malady of temper, not of frame, that caused her sudden flow of tears, and now inspired the ungracious unsatisfactory responses, she so sparingly condescended to their tender inquiries of alarmed solicitude.

As this suspicion at length acquired the strength of belief, the fears of relapse into serious illness were lulled in the bosom of Lady Derville, who therefore forbore to summon that medical aid she had talked of doing. This change of plan proved new mortification to Lady Meliora, who saw by it the truth was developed; and now, in alarm of having it discovered that envy was the source of her mental malady, it became her anxious aim to play the sick woman with better effect than she had before succeeded in; a measure she felt some severe pangs of repentance for having adopted, on the arrival of Lord Derville, who had remained in Albemarle Street until the arrival of Mrs. Allworthy's equipage; and who, coming to inquire at his sister's chamber door, how she found herself, added—

"Well, you must contrive to sleep off your fatigue, and with it your tendency to illness; for you must both, young ladies, arise with the lark, in the highest zenith of your charms, to form two of a delectable party, projected after your departure, for Windsor."

The mental pangs of Lady Meliora now become torturing, at having performed so pertinaciously the part of a sick woman, that she feared she could not with any degree of plausibility recover sufficiently to undertake this increase of subduing fatigue; but soon her brother, by increasing her real malady, diminished her wish of forming one of this party; for his lordship continued—

"To you, our lovely Rose, our gratitude is debtor for this delicious party, since it was the proposition of Captain Duncombe; and although renowned as a hero he may be, he is but a shallow politician, as it required but little sagacity to fathom his politics, and to scent out it was your fascinations that set him wild to sail about the world, in quest of opportunities

of feasting his eyes upon your all subduing charms. So the deeply smitten Strephon proposed our setting off to-morrow for some days into Berkshire, to see Windsor, White Knights, &c. and invited the whole party to make his house our inn during our excursion—since he has, it seems, a beautiful place on the skirts of Windsor Forest—and if grandam should not choose to go, the O'Dowds will take charge of you both, and convey you in a smart landau they have got from Leader, whilst their own superb one is building. But whether we are to have the felicity of the Standard of Perfection's presence to crown our delights, I know not; for the gruff knight ran restive, and would not draw his coach out; and although that notable dame, his spouse, nearly suffocated me with suppressed risibility at her manœuvring, to billet herself and hopefuls on any kind accommodators; she succeeded no further at present, than in procuring a place for her nephew the sailor, in Captain Duncombe's carriage, with him and Ne-

ville. And now, *bon soir;* sleep industriously, that you may arise in good time, and in the most brilliant burnish of transcendent beauty."

CHAPTER VI.

But Lady Meliora determined she would neither sleep herself industriously, nor suffer her all-subduing friend to do so; or do any thing industriously, but contrive vexation and trouble for those around her; for so completely had the "foul fiend" Envy taken possession of her bosom, that all her innate goodness, her affection, her generosity, her gratitude, seemed chased at once. In the bitter asperity of this baleful passion, she determined Captain Duncombe should be disappointed, and Rosa bereaved of the triumph of being adulated as queen of the revels, by and through the homage of the master of the mansion where the party were to be entertained; nor could all the compunctious feelings, which shot through her upbraiding heart, at the idea of perhaps preventing the insulated portionless friend of her life

from forming an advantageous and happy union, find effect.

In conformity with this intention of performing the dire and odious inspirations of her envy, she informed Lady Derville she was infinitely too much indisposed, to render it possible to comply with her brother's kind wish, for her attempting to form one of this party in contemplation.

Lady Derville now felt terror the most poignant assail her bosom, through the alarmed conviction, that her darling must be absolutely under the dominion of serious sickness, or she would not thus decidedly yield up the prospect of so delightful an excursion; and through the inspiration of her apprehension she exclaimed—

"I had better then, my dear child, lose not another moment in summoning Doctor Baillie to restore your health."

"Oh! not to-night, dear grandmama, but in the morning, if I am not benefited by a night of rest, it will, I fear, be necessary. But you, Rosa—you, who have no ailments:—you, who are the idol set up

for this brilliant occasion, you have nothing to prevent your accompanying your wonderfully attached friends, the O'Dowds, to try if you cannot improve this grand conquest you have made, into something more advantageous, than your old Ravenswood friends could manage for you."

"My beloved Meliora," returned Rosa, with a heart saddened by sorrow, at the conviction, now painfully introduced to her bosom, of the nature of her friend's malady; "my beloved Meliora may rest assured, that whilst illness hovers near her, I shall not be drawn from affection's post by any new friends,—shall not forget that vast debt of gratitude, my heart, in unfaltering duty, must ever pant to pay to my invaluable Ravenswood friends, through any lure of promised advantage; was it even presented to me in a more certain form, than the probably transient fancy of an acquaintance of a few hours."

The heart of Lady Meliora thrilled painfully; and for a moment her struggle was powerful between her deforming envy and her natural feelings, which prompted her

to clasp her friend to her bosom, and pronounce she must go to Windsor; but envy conquered,—and she remained ungraciously silent: when Lady Derville, subdued to every tone of former tenderness by Rosabella's affectionate declaration, and struck with a foreboding pang of apprehension, that all was not at this moment in a state to merit approbation in her darling's mind, gravely said—

"Should we in the morning find the attendance of a physician unnecessary, there can then exist no cause whatever for Rosa's not accompanying the O'Dowds. It is my earnest wish, to see my dear *protégée* eligibly settled; for the uncertainty of human life cannot insure her my protection always: and since, unfortunately, she cannot comply with my earnest wish of making the inestimable Mr. Sternham happy, I am inclined to form a new wish, that she should try her fortune here, and improve the favourable impression she has beyond all doubt made upon this amiable, affluent, pleasing, and extremely handsome captain."

"I fear I shall not be better to-morrow, grandmama," said Lady Meliora: for in her bosom was the conviction that she *would* not; as Lady Derville had augmented her malady, by her testimony of the impression Rosa had made upon a man her vanity had panted to captivate.

And now, wholly under the dominion of this diabolical passion, which shrinks from nothing ignoble,—nothing of cruelty, dishonour, and of falsehood—to accomplish its own vindictive purposes, Lady Meliora at length sent her adoring, infirm, and venerable grandmother to a sleepless pillow, to brood over the expected illness of this idol; who herself performed her vigil, to plan and project specious appearances of real indisposition, to detain our heroine from this impending party. But these plans and projects were useless expenditure of time and ingenuity; since the pre-occupied heart of Rosabella could only shrink from the idea of improving to serious attachment the favourable impression she had made upon Captain Duncombe.

The night of writhing mortification pass-

ed by Lady Meliora gave to her appearance the alarming aspect for her purpose; and, at early dawn, a messenger was dispatched for Doctor Baillie, by the terrified grandmother; when, to the infinite relief of the young lady, who feared his invincible penetration should delve into her mental malady, as expertly as into those of the human frame,—word was returned, "that this celebrated physician was in attendance at Windsor;" and now, in one of her politically assumed froward humours, her grandmother had ever at times been accustomed to, she positively declined seeing any other of the sons of Æsculapius.

"For I now feel convinced," she said, "that Rosa's kind nursing will be quite sufficient for me."

"But Rosa I wish should go to Windsor," replied Lady Derville. "Would it not be cruelty and selfishness to detain her, Meliora, when you feel conviction, that medical aid is unnecessary for you?"

"The cruelty is of my own infliction, madam," said Rosabella, firmly; "since

nothing but your absolute command shall send me from her; and the selfishness mine that chains me to the side of my friend, as long as she requires my care."

"Meliora," said Lady Derville, "I trust you will remember all this; and what a probable sacrifice of incalculable advantages Rosa has thus made, in friendship to you."

Lady Meliora did remember it; since it never was absent from her thoughts the whole day: it incessantly smote her heart, but to no effective purpose; for the dominion of her baleful passion was not at present to be overthrown; and her self-upbraidings only increased the irritation of her temper, and poor Rosa's difficulty of doing or saying any thing to please her.

After proclaiming herself so ill as to require the aid of a physician, and the sacrifices her friend had made, Lady Meliora could not in possibility quit her chamber that day; and when she beheld how auspicious the weather proved for that excursion, which but for herself she might

have formed one of, repentance commenced its operation on her mind; and soon she began to conceive, that probably she had, by her own injudicious management, lost the glorious opportunity of winning a decided conquest from this all-subduing Rosabella; since a second interview might have led to the conviction of her superior charms. But to correct this error in judgment, and recover this lost opportunity of restoring her fallen consequence by a glaring triumph, she knew not how to accomplish, without betraying her own besetting sin, and acknowledging ill temper her ailment; and the increase of irritation this new belief and repentance occasioned, nearly threw her into that state she had been almost wishing, through the night, that morning might find her in.

Rosa, with all the gentle affectionate kindness of her nature, attempted various means for beguiling the time of this self-dubbed invalide; but still, still to no purpose. The suffering child of envy could not be comforted.

At length, after a knock at the door

had proclaimed a visitor, Betty appeared to announce, that Captain Hawk was below.

"Captain Hawk!" Lady Meliora exclaimed, in a tone of vexation that she had not manœuvred to get down to the drawing room, since he was come. "Why, I thought for a certainty, that he must have formed one of this fine party. How excessively rude not to ask him to join it!"

"Why was Captain Hawk let in," demanded Lady Derville, "when I issued an order for no one to be admitted?"

"My lady, he admitted himself," Betty replied; "for he would take no denial; for he said, 'it was his heart that was bent on seeing Miss Frederick,' which myself thinks was a queer thing to tell the *fut*man; so he desired his compliments might be conveyed to Miss Frederick, with his earnest entreaty, that she would honour him by a five minutes' conference."

Lady Meliora blushed to the deepest tint of vermilion, and then blanched to the lily's hue, as she faltered out—

"Come here to call on Rosa! What, is he another of your universal conquests, all-subduing Rosa? or is he the embassador of an *imperial* mission?"

"Madam," asked Rosabella calmly, "shall I, or not, go down to answer Captain Hawk's inquiries for Lady Meliora?"

"Certainly, my dear, go down to him; for as his kind solicitude leads him not to feel satisfied with the bulletin of the servants, it would be uncivil and unkind, not to comply with his request."

Rosa in consequence descended to the drawing room, to answer those inquiries she doubted not she was summoned for; and after having answered them briefly, she wondered Captain Hawk evinced no intention of departure; but he was too experienced a general not to loiter, and by his studied abstraction, and repetition of inquiry, to impress on the mind of her he concluded to be the confidant of the object of his pursuit, the depth of that interest he felt for her friend; which he

took care to let her know had caused his yielding the pleasures of the party he had been pressed to join.

But he loitered so long, that at length Lady Meliora became as impatient for his departure as our heroine herself; and her uneasiness at the long protracted absence of Rosabella, whom she pretended she wanted to go to Lady Flowerdew's milliner's, to buy a Virgin of the Sun's veil, for her to wear at the approaching *fête*, induced Lady Derville herself to descend and break up the conference, by sending Rosa to her friend.

"Well, child, I conclude every preliminary must have been arranged by this time, between you and your new suitor," said Lady Meliora, in a tone betraying chagrin, whilst affecting gaiety.

"Upon my word," Rosa replied, "we have parted without settling any thing,—even the poor man's mind, relative to the degree of credit he might, could, should, or would, honour my testimony relative to your ladyship's health with; for he examined and cross-examined me,

until I was completely weary of repetition's catechism."

"Why, what did the man say, that could in possibility weary you, Rosa?" demanded Lady Meliora, in accents of more harmonized tranquillity.

Rosa repeated all, since she thought this might afford her an opportunity of venturing a little advice to her imprudent friend, relative to her reprehensible flirtation with this man.

"Well, child, as we cannot convict poor Captain Hawk of inebriation so early in the day, what can we convict him of?"

"Why, clearly of being over head and ears in love with your *ignis fatuus* ladyship."

"In love with me, child! Oh! no, you mistake. No, it is with yourself you mean:—no one is in love with me, you find, but *tasteless* Lord Montalbert."

"Do not affect to plead ignorance," said Rosabella gravely, "in what you are perfectly conscious of; and which—forgive what I am about to say, since it is

inspired by that very attachment you profess for Lord Montalbert — and which, I grieve to say, my dear Meliora, you have aided greatly to encourage."

"What!" exclaimed her ladyship, blushing with indignant pride, "do you mean to insinuate, Miss Frederick, that no man could fall in love with me, without my encouraging aid to such a difficult achievement?"

"Assuredly, no," Rosa quietly answered; "but in the vivacity of your nature you have inadvertently fanned the flame in this man's bosom, by attending to him with encouraging complacency, until it has become one of such a serious nature, that it may be found difficult to extinguish."

"Well," replied Lady Meliora, "and what care I for that? It cannot be expected of beauty to perform the drudgery of carrying buckets like the Danaides, for the ineffectual attempt of extinguishing the flames we kindle."

"Certainly not, since in many cases, like the efforts of the poor Danaides, it

might prove labour in vain; but still, kind humanity might allow you sometimes benignly to plug the buckets, and allow you to convey a little water of discouragement to the heart of a deserving man, to prevent the demolition of his happiness; more particularly if you were yourself in danger of being scorched a little by the flame that is consuming him."

"There exists no danger," replied Lady Meliora, contemptuously, "of my being scorched by the flame that is consuming Captain Hawk."

"I hope there is not, since your attachment to Lord Montalbert must prove your shield; but yet you know not to what a precipice this—on your part thoughtless—flirtation may lead you. What, my dear Meliora, should you feel, if it entrapped you in the toils of honour, from which neither the fangs of the law nor influence of equity could allow you to escape, even when Lord Montalbert should return to woo you for his bride?"

"Do not croak like the raven, pray," said Lady Meliora, haughtily. "The note

grates on my ears, and the form is unbecoming to you: therefore keep on your own, child."

"That of Lady Meliora Monson's humble companion:—too humble to aspire to her friendship. Well then, be it so," responded Rosabella, as the rising flood of wounded affection's tears led her to a precipitate flight from the room.

Lady Meliora was shocked, was terrified, as her heart smote her for this unprovoked unkindness to her dear and amiable Rosabella; and conviction arose to her mind, of its rapidly increasing deformities. Yet, in the moment her vanity was writhing with all the scorpion stings of unexpected mortification, she could not bend to Rosa, to her rival,—she, who was sucking all the sweets from the flowers of her hopes, from the hive in which she had concentrated all the joys of life—the hive of admiration, where she was to reign sole queen. No, Lady Meliora was not sufficiently humbled,—the tone of her horror at herself was not yet deep enough, to lead her through the path of

penitence to the rising ground of reformation; and although she beheld her errors, the arbitrary power of her ever uncontrolled spirit and self-importance would not permit her to confess herself in fault, implore the forgiveness of her amiable friend, endeavour at the subjugation of her baleful envy, and learn resignation to the unexpected misery of having the beauty of Rosabella preferred to hers.

And now, in the irritation of her mind, as she would not pursue the right path to restore the sunbeams of internal approbation's genial tranquillity, all her ladyship could do, was bitterly to weep in vexation, and in the very highest flood of her tears she was found by her grandmother.

CHAPTER VII.

"My child! my idol!" exclaimed Lady Derville, "what under Heaven can ail you? Ah! I see too clearly, it is as I suspected, your malady is mental. Say, my darling treasure, what has occurred to distress you, that, if it is in the power of affection to remove the cause of your grief, I may hasten my efforts for its accomplishment."

Lady Meliora was silent, since thoroughly ashamed of the cause of her grief; and her tears flowed on, until at length the agony of distress she saw her venerable grandmother overwhelmed by, in alarm and anxiety for her, compelled her to articulate—

"I—I—indeed I do not very well know what is the matter; but certainly I am not quite myself; and then, Miss Rosa must take up an offence, because I said a peevish word to her, and to subdue

me ran out of the room blubbering like a baby."

"Rosa run out of the room weeping!! —Ah! I fear all is not right between you. Confide in me, my angel child, and allow me to judge the matter. Much as I regard Rosa, you cannot doubt but my extreme partiality will lead me to judge you leniently."

"Then," replied Lady Meliora, anxious to turn from the embarrassing subject, "you must be a very improper judge, since you own partiality would make you lean to me."

"You then acknowledge my suspicions are just," said Lady Derville, "yet you will not confide in me. Must I apply then to Rosa? She will not treat me with unkind reserve."

"Miss Frederick knows nothing of the matter, madam, or I should strongly recommend your ladyship's application to her; since she, no doubt, must be all mental as well as personal perfection."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Lady Derville, with the most unequivocal ex-

pression of horror portrayed on her agitated countenance, "that the anguish is for me, to find the idol of my heart—her, whom I believed not more perfect in form than excellent in mind, is suffering from the pangs of diabolical envy."

Lady Meliora turned to the pale hue of guilt, and trembled in its painful agitation; but, from being convicted of so vile a stain upon her matchless perfections, her proud spirit, her redundant vanity recoiled in dismay; and in their toils, as sin engenders sin, she inlisted under the banners of an attendant transgression to skreen her; and, after a few painful struggles she entered the maze of falsehood, and said—

"Shame, my dear grandmama, at my own weakness in cherishing an ardent passion for a man, who, I find it is possible, at this very moment, is losing all recollection of the power I once possessed over his affections, has prevented my imparting, in the first moments of my affliction, the cause of my distress to you; and thus leaving you to the wide field of conjecture,

you have *kindly* conjured up a *flattering* phantom of envy as the cause; and to exorcise this *amiable* sprite, I am compelled to do violence to my wounded feelings, and confess, that Mr. Edward Standard's having accidentally mentioned seeing Lord Montalbert at Paris, with a most beautiful young woman hanging on his arm, is my ailment."

As Lady Meliora expected, all her grandmother's suspicions were removed at once, and every degrading thought of her converted into tender sympathy for her mental suffering, and into self-reproach for having dared to surmise any thing against this superhuman creature's excellence. And now a thousand fond caresses and affectionate soothings were the reward of this disingenuousness; but at length, after Lady Derville had drawn largely upon her maternal exertions, to discover some path to consolation for her idol, who repeatedly declared she should never survive the inconstancy of Lord Montalbert, she ventured to advise her darling to effect an

immediate reconciliation with poor Rosa, by acknowledging at once the cause of her unusual irritability.

But to this advice Lady Meliora could not yield compliance, since from repeating a deliberate falsehood a second time her heart revolted. The inspirations of her present demoniac bosom-counsellors had led her to the fabrication; but, once uttered, she abhorred herself for it: yet even while doing so, and shrinking from uttering it herself again, she, in the mazy windings of the reptile path she had entered, permitted her grandmother to seek our heroine, and by this untruth to account for her indisposition and excuse her petulance.

Lady Derville, having found her *protégée*, perceived by the appearance of her eyes that she had been weeping; but, having it in her power, she believed, to obliterate all remembrance of the cause which excited those tears, she hastened to effect this oblivion to the unkindness of her darling, by relating its cause.

The smallest glance at conciliation was

sufficient for Rosabella, with those she loved, to obtain her full forgiveness for every offence committed against her; and she would have flown on the wings of affection to embrace her beloved friend in renewal of their amity, had not Lady Derville detained her, to hear her lamentation for her Meliora's having so unfortunately yielded her heart so irrevocably to Lord Montalbert.

"Who, certainly," her ladyship said, "is of all men the one I wish to see my darling united to; and perhaps I have been as romantic as herself, in setting my heart upon this alliance: since it is long, very long since in hopes and wishes I selected him from all mankind for her; and therefore I feel it will prove a direful blow, even to me, if I am disappointed; and in consequence of these very feelings of my own upon the subject, I am the more inclined to place a trembling faith in the prediction of her heart breaking, should he prove inconstant.

"But, my dear Rosa," Lady Derville continued, "as it is mental misery my

child is suffering from, we must strive to withdraw her thoughts, as much as possible, from this unfortunate subject, and give them more cheering themes; and you must aid me in persuading her to accompany us to-morrow, on a visit of a few days to Lady Elstow, who is too much an invalide to visit me at present, and who has been very importunate for my passing some days with her; and the absence of my boys affords me an excellent opportunity of gratifying her wish, as she has no accommodation for them or Mr. Sternham. And beside this change of scene proving, as I trust it will, beneficial to Meliora's mental health, the change of air will renovate her bloom against the Park *fête*, which I mean you shall all attend, since you may never again have the power of beholding any thing like it: and, talking of that, reminds me I have ordered the coach for your obliging me, by going to Lady Flowerdew's milliner, to choose a very beautiful white lace veil, of the kind to be worn on Monday, as a gift from me to my poor heart-wrung child; as I wish

her dress that day suited to her high rank and transcendent beauty; for I would have Lord Montalbert learn from the admiring multitude, when he returns, how much she was followed, and how justly admired."

According to the wish of Lady Derville, who feared an interview of reconciliation might too much affect her darling, Rosa did not appear before Lady Meliora, until she returned with her grandmother's superb and beautiful gift; which at once accomplished the purpose of effacing from this spoiled child's mind all remembrance of her late unjustifiable unkindness to her inestimable young friend, and restored her good temper sufficiently, to induce a compliance with Lady Derville's wish of going on the subsequent day to Lady Elstow's.

The remainder of this day passed in perfect amity; for now, all the asperities of Lady Meliora's mortified vanity were completely *veiled:* and on the succeeding morning the grandmother, her idol, and her *protégée*, set out on their visit to Lady

Elstow, who had been apprised of their coming the preceding evening, leaving Mr. Sternham raving with indignant ire at Rosabella being thus taken from his pursuit, and being left for three whole days to the misery of solitude.

Lady Meliora, who had never before been at Richmond, had all its beauties to explore; and in her impatience to sally forth to see and be seen, she totally forgot the part of a sick woman, that she had been playing to such good effect for the last six and thirty hours; and as the arrival of Lady Derville did not now militate against any favourite plan of amusement, but on the contrary rescued her from the monotony of a dull *tête à tête*, Miss Noyes was in the happy disposition cheerfully to attend the young friends, as *cicerone*, and in high triumph led them to the terrace on the hill, to display to some admired misses whom she panted to humble, two beauties, whose surpassing charms must make them hide their woefully diminished heads. Here Lady Meliora walked in the altitude of ecstasy, proclaim-

ing the delight she experienced at beholding the scenery below her; when, to her increase of ecstasy, she saw Captain Hawk emerge from the Star and Garter Tavern, and hastening towards them. As he drew near, he exclaimed—

"Oh! what an unexpected pleasure is this, after the dismal account I received of you yesterday, to find you walking on this hill so evidently restored to health!"

"And to us this is also a most unexpected encounter," replied Lady Meliora, blushing in all the brightly mantling emotion of gratified vanity. "Only think of our meeting you on Richmond Hill!"

"You could think nothing else," returned Captain Hawk, in tones carefully betraying growing tenderness, "if you could have divined my having obtained information of your being here. The fact was, I rode to Sloane Street, to make my anxious—O how anxious!—inquiries; where learning you were just set out for Richmond, I instantly gallopped after you; and concluding if you were unable to walk out, that Miss Frederick was not, and of

course would visit Richmond Hill; I therefore made the Star and Garter my perch, as from thence I could watch for her approach, to hear from her of you."

"You would make an admirable general," said Lady Meliora, with a sweet encouraging smile of gratitude.

"I shall pronounce myself one," he replied, in love's softening accents, "if I should have the glorious triumph of succeeding in that siege my heart is fixed on carrying."

"So, so," thought Miss Noyes—who, contrary to his intention, heard this response—"these young ladies find Richmond Hill a most accommodating place for assignations;"—and now, kindly doing as she would be done by, she dropped the arm of Lady Meliora from its link in hers, and falling behind her ladyship and her evident *inamorato*, inquired from her remaining companion, "if she too expected her Strephon?" and as Rosa bloomed no conscious blush as she uttered a smiling negative, Miss Noyes felt satisfied she was sincere.

"Is this a favoured lover, my dear?" she next demanded.

"Of his being a lover, I fear I cannot doubt," said Rosabella, "but certainly not a favoured one. Neither his rank, I mean as to family, nor his fortune, I imagine, can entitle him to the hand of Lady Meliora Monson."

"Then assuredly he is not favoured, at least, by Lady Derville; so perhaps I had better not give him any invitation to Lady Elstow's."

"It will be kindness to him eventually if you do not; since, as he cannot in possibility succeed, the less he sees of her the better," said Rosa, who with great astonishment and infinite concern at such unjustifiable coquetry in her friend, now beheld Lady Meliora listening to Captain Hawk with an intensity of attention, that seemed to give every degree of encouragement to his evident suit.

The observation of Rosabella was just, for Lady Meliora was pouring oil upon the mingled flame of interest and inclination in his bosom, by the most flattering

attention to all he uttered; and the most gratifying encouragement to all that he artfully articulated or betrayed in attestation of his passion: for so elated was her vanity at his adulation; so grateful for his steady distinguishing homage, when all others seemed to have lost the faculty of discriminating where the most superlative beauty and fascinations were to be found; that she lost all recollection of Rosa's unpalatable warning, and of the precipice she was blindly rushing to; and in the triumph of sacrificing a man's happiness at the shrine of her transcendent charms, totally forgot the possibility of the inextricable toils she might be winding round herself.

At length Rosabella, led by her uneasiness at this dangerous as reprehensible conduct in her beloved friend, ventured to remind Lady Meliora of the time she had been walking in the subduing heat of the day, and of the alarming effect too much fatigue had so recently had upon her; when instantly Captain Hawk, as

a man whose existence was wrapt up in hers, implored her to walk no longer; in a manner that evinced, whilst anxiety for her health urged his persuasions, that it was torture to part from her.

"But perhaps, after a sufficient degree of rest, you may be able to take a few turns here in the evening," he tenderly added.

"No," she replied, "Miss Noyes has arranged for our going on the water."

"At what hour?" he eagerly demanded, "that I may have the transport of attending you."

"I know not; but look, that is Lady Elstow's house; you can see it from the Star and Garter; and if you are *very* anxious to join Miss Noyes' party, you will look out for us."

"One of Miss Noyes' party I wish to join for life," he replied. Her ladyship, with a conscious blush and enchanting smile, told him he was "a presumptuous animal," and so they parted; the captain in high exultation at the position his well

managed artillery had already obtained for him; and her ladyship something in the pouts at her not having him still with her, to supply her with the exhilarating cordial of flattery, to continue sweet lullabies to the new pangs of wounded vanity, inflicted by the intelligence this wily suitor had been careful to convey to her, "that Lord William Rentlorn was going, the day after the park *fête*, to the Continent, for some months, with his eldest brother, to recruit their skeleton finances." That his lordship should so unexpectedly prove an apostate, and go, without even declaring himself her slave, or even taking the trouble of ascertaining whether she would accept him or not, were insults to her charms not to be patiently endured; and in her indignant ire, led her to determine upon seeking palliatives for such a glaring desertion, by entoiling every man who beheld her through the magic of her fascinations. With this mania of vanity strong upon her, she thought every moment was inimical to her consequence, until she could again emerge from the

eclipsing mansion of Lady Elstow, to dazzle, by the brilliant sun of her resplendent beauty, all who should happen to come within its rays.

CHAPTER VIII.

The dinner circle at Lady Elstow's was not increased by the addition of any strangers, and Lady Meliora thought the sombre meal lagged on leaden wings: but still it did pass away; and the moment at length arrived for her to remind Miss Noyes of her promise to take her upon the Thames. But the mere mention of a water party threw Lady Derville into such an agony of alarm, that it required the whole force of her granddaughter's infatuating influence to win her consent to the measure; nor could it have been obtained, had not Lady Elstow assured her it was her own staunch boat they were to go in; and her watermen some of the most steady and experienced on the river.

At length Lady Meliora prevailed, and sallied forth, accompanied by Miss Noyes and our heroine, who was almost as much an enemy to the expedition as her be-

nefactress herself; not through the inspirations of fear, but through the painful conviction, that her beloved Meliora was acting imprudently at least, if not reprehensibly, by her palpable encouragement of Captain Hawk; nor was she likely to become more reconciled to their aquatic party, when, on the moment they made their *sortie* from the house, the gallant captain joined them, and received from her thoughtless ladyship the most flattering reception.

"How came you to guess the moment of our setting out so well?" she coquetishly exclaimed. "One really could almost suppose you were absolutely anxious to meet us."

This sally was only replied to by an expressive glance, an audible sigh, and a tender smile.

"Does Lady Derville know to what a height this flirtation has advanced?" demanded Miss Noyes, in a whisper to Rosa.

"Oh! no," said Rosa; "but I would give worlds she did know it through any

means but mine, to check the vivacity of Lady Meliora, who, unaccustomed to restraint—because in the life of total seclusion she has led no circumstance could arise to call for it—is by no means aware of how thoughtlessly she is acting."

"Then, since you wish it, I will mention it to Lady Elstow as the result of my own observations, and she will disclose it to her friend," said Miss Noyes; "for I think she ought immediately to be apprised of it, to let this evidently designing man know, Lady Meliora's conduct to him arises through her ignorance of the usages of the world, not through intentional encouragement to him."

At this moment they had accomplished their descent from the hill, and were drawing near to the spot of their embarkation, when a handsome and fashionable looking young man bowed coolly to Miss Noyes; but upon his eyes glancing on Rosabella, he added a smile to his bow; and a second glance led him "to hope Miss Noyes was well."

"Another glance, Mr. Suckling, will

lead to the inquiry, proper — for Lady Elstow," replied Miss Noyes, smiling archly; "and a steadfast gaze, to the wish, natural, to join our party, since we are going on the water."

Mr. Suckling blushed, and seemed to hesitate, when Miss Noyes continued—

"Oh! but you may venture; for by the veracity of Petrarch, it will not be to commit yourself; since she is not, 'a has been, turned the shady side of twenty,' but is still, absolutely, in the leading strings of your lawful admiration."

"You are such a quizzer, Miss Noyes, that I know not if I dare hope you will really do me the honour of permitting me to join your party."

"Oh! most willing am I to permit it, for the eccentricity of the measure," she replied; "to have it murmured through the woods, and responded by the Naiades; until Strawberry Hill wafts it in amaze to Marble Hall; until all the misses in their teens might muster around Pope's once flourishing willow,—was it still there for them to wail beneath, that the Hon.

Lambe Suckling had degraded himself, by actually venturing into a boat with an antique of twenty-nine."

"You are really too bad, Miss Noyes," said Mr. Suckling, now politely offering her his arm.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed, "even taking me to your arms! This is indeed, a waltzing whirl in opinion. But hold, ere we proceed I must perform an introduction—Miss Frederick, in this descendant of Adonis, or Paris—which is it, sir? you behold the Hon. Lambe Suckling, youngest son to the Earl of Buddingfield; one of the Hebe patrons of the present day; one of those *amateurs* of juvenility, who sends every woman post haste to the land of decrepitude, who has arrived at the lawful years of discretion; and, the moment the sage decree of our forefathers pronounces us able to guide ourselves, by whose decree we are voted crutches to hobble into shade upon. So, my dear Miss Frederick, should you have passed the grand climacterick of fifteen, keep the secret inviolably from him, or he will sail off from

us on the back of a swan in an agony of horror; perceiving in his mind's eye, as the aurelia changes to the fly, your form in transmutation to that horror most horrible, an aged spinster."

"Really, I must repeat," said Mr. Suckling, a little chagrined, "Miss Noyes, you are too bad."

"I much fear," said Rosa, smiling, "I must transmute into the changing chrysalis, by pleading guilty to the fact of having past that desperate climacterick."

"Hush! hush! are you crazed? Consider how instantaneously such impolitic confessions wrinkle faces. Ever whilst you wish to please, keep shears in hand to clip your age with."

At this moment, Lady Meliora and her adulating escort turned back—for they were in advance—to inquire from Miss Noyes the turn they were to proceed down; when Mr. Suckling, struck by her ladyship's beauty also, exclaimed—

"Why, Miss Noyes, you must assuredly have been on a trafficking voyage to the Mussulman's Paradise."

"And, pray, which of my importations will you die for?"

"It would be impossible to decide, with optics so dazzled as mine."

"Shall I assist you to determine? Memorandums to be found on the mental tablet of the Hon. Lambe Suckling. 'The last face seen, to be deemed the most beautiful. The titled to be preferred to the untitled;' therefore, the Houri on before us is absolutely the most surpassing beauty,—insomuch, as she burst upon your dazzled vision, about five minutes and nineteen seconds later than this nymph of Paradise; and is the daughter of a noble earl withal. So now take courage, you that have long shrunk from such a measure,—shut your eyes, and recommending yourself to the mercy of—Hope —without more ado plunge headlong into the stream of love, for Lady Meliora Monson. Yet, hold, hold! oh, hold! Be not rash, I conjure you, man! since a voice whispers in my memory's ear, that my untitled Houri has yet a claim to thy love — being nine months, twenty-nine days —

eighty-four hours, fifty-five minutes, and forty-three seconds, junior to her ladyship."

"No, no, no, not so much by many seconds," exclaimed Lady Meliora, laughing, as she darted back to adhere to the following party, determined to contest every inch of this promising captive's heart with Rosabella.

"Then, may I crave the precise difference in your ages, since much depends upon that," said Miss Noyes, with the sage gravity of astrological mystery.

"Alas! that cannot be to a nicety ascertained," responded Lady Meliora in the same strain; "since some cruel wight purloined the testimony of her natal hour, to cloud, perchance, her pending lucky planet."

"Well, that point must be dismissed, since it cannot by decision influence," returned Miss Noyes; "but to counterpoise your ladyship's attractive *hereditary* charms,—this meek Houri produces the imperial stamp of beauty. The emperor pronounced hers—superlative."

"I must echo Mr. Suckling," said Rosa, blushing, "and say, 'you are too bad, Miss Noyes, and quiz unmercifully.'"

"Rather, you ought, Miss Frederick, to say," exclaimed Lady Meliora, endeavouring not to betray a tone of vexation, 'Miss Noyes, you are too good; I fear you will fatigue yourself by blowing the trumpet for me thus indefatigably.'"

"So, so," said the active thoughts of Mr. Suckling, "this decides for me. Were I selecting a wife, the untitled Houri should be my choice; but the other is piqued at the idea of being despoiled of my preference; has something, I fancy, of an agreeable vixen in her; and being thus on the alert for my admiration, will take the most flattering trouble to elicit it;—as to the other, she is too dangerous for pastime. I will therefore attack where I have nothing to fear."

"Accordingly he did commence the attack; and managed so judiciously by the incense of flattery, that ere they had been half an hour on the Thames, her ladyship's encouraging smiles seemed

equally bestowed on both her adulators; and ere their aquatic excursion terminated, had removed every apprehension from the mind of Rosabella relative to Captain Hawk; since she could not doubt, but conviction was introduced into his mind as to what degree of hope he could erect upon encouragement, so thoughtlessly bestowed upon all who sought it.

Miss Noyes beheld this new flirtation under the same impression, and therefore no longer hesitated to aid in fixing Captain Hawk in the society of Lady Meliora, but invited him with Mr. Suckling to take tea at Lady Elstow's, an invitation gratefully accepted by both; the one, as it afforded him an opportunity of proceeding in his sinister project—for as he promptly fathomed the intent of Mr. Suckling's assiduities, he feared him not,—and the other, for the gratification he experienced in finding an exquisitely beautiful girl of birth and fortune, exerting herself to the most captivating pitch of her witcheries for his fascination.

On the subsequent morning, Lady Me-

liora arose in exulting expectation of riveting the fetters she had thrown around Mr. Suckling's heart, and of an extent of glorious conquest; as Miss Noyes had engaged him and Captain Hawk, to form two of another party on the Thames that day, for the purpose of showing Hampton Court to Lady Meliora.

Miss Noyes being judged by Lady Elstow of sufficient maturity to *chaperon* the party, she took the young friends under her charge, and set out upon the water, attended by their punctual escort.

In due time they arrived at Hampton Court, when Miss Noyes could not resist the impulse of reminding Lady Meliora, how inattentive she had been to the beautiful embankments of the Thames, between which the party had been led solely for her ladyship's amusement, Miss Frederick having been there already.

"Ah! now," her ladyship replied, "do not lay this reprehensible inattention to my charge; since these unconscionable men have the misdemeanor solely to answer for, in not choosing forsooth, that

I should bestow my admiration upon any thing but their charming selves."

"Well," answered Miss Noyes, "I trust your ladyship's condescending goodness in obliging them may be suspended, whilst we are hurried on by a winged *cicerone*, in breathless haste to pocket his fee for attendance, lest I should feel inclined to repentance for having admitted them of our party; as it is somewhat mortifying to devise amusement and find it unattended by success."

"Oh!" exclaimed Lady Meliora, with apparent pleasantry, yet highly indignant, at a person so much beneath her in rank presuming to reprove her; and firmly resolved not to be chid from her own way by the dependent relative of Lady Elstow, "Oh! but you are not disappointed in the amusement you devised for me. You provided *beaux esprits* to flirt with me; and surely I have entered into that pastime you prepared for me. But perhaps, Miss Noyes, you wish me to spare one of them to escort you and Miss Frederick through this sombre looking pile. If so, I appoint

you, Captain Hawk, to take these forlorn damsels under your protection, to defend them from the ghost of Wolsey, or the wicked Harry his master, who else might come out pounce upon them, for a seventh and eighth *cara sposa*. Nay, good man, do not look so crest-fallen, as if I were sending you upon a forlorn hope. You know I can make amends by flirting with you, when Mr. Suckling will have discovered some babe in the woods, as a successful rival to poor aged me."

Captain Hawk, with a very disconsolate countenance was most unwillingly preparing for this unprofitable duty her ladyship had assigned him; when Miss Noyes, extending her hand with forbidding gesticulation, said—

"Most reluctant, avaunt! We condescend not to unwilling escorts. We stoop not to suffer obligation to proud beauties for their supernumerary knights. No, no, most worthy compassionates, we can find amulets against the eighth Harry and his ambitious satellite, and charms too for raising up true and loyal champions.

Ay, I warrant, we have such potent charms at our command, we may animate even the Black Prince himself from the canvass, and lure him to our feet to swear allegiance."

"Well," said Captain Hawk, relaxing to a smile, on finding his escort would not be accepted; "well, and since you thus uncourteously disdain my aid, should you require my potent arm to combat even shadows in your defence, I will bear malice and not relent to your service, although importuned on your suppliant knees."

"May my base knees turn to toadstools for sycophants to feed on, if ever they degenerate and bend to thee, uncourteous man!" exclaimed Miss Noyes, in a tone of grotesque bombast that attracted the attention of two of the cavalry officers, then stationed at Hampton Court, who were at this moment going up the staircase before our party; when turning their heads back to see who had uttered this theatrical sally, they beheld so alluring a form in the companion of

Miss Noyes, that one of them, with pleasure recollecting a circumstance occurring at a Richmond ball that could authorize his doing so, stopped and bowed profoundly to Miss Noyes, and although for the soul of him he could not remember her name, or whether he had ever heard it, he with a tone of flattering interest—

"Hoped she had been well, since last he had had the pleasure of seeing her."

Miss Noyes had a better recollection of nomenclature than this young peer, for she recognised him to be Lord Marsborough; and upon answering with respondent cordial courtesy, his lordship introduced his friend Sir James Steelthorp; and Miss Noyes announced our heroine as a ward of the Dowager Lady Derville's to them; whom, as the spirit of female retaliation was aroused to full animation in her bosom, she determined to lure, if possible, into becoming hers and Rosa's escort, to mortify Lady Meliora. And as Miss Noyes could at plea-

sure enchant by her powers of conversation; and as our heroine's fascinations, both mental and personal, had not been dealt to her with a sparing hand, she found no difficulty in achieving her exploit; for the two gentlemen being as willing to retain the post her wishes assigned them as she could desire, she derived no small portion of amusement on beholding the misery of Lady Meliora, and her evident endeavours to break from her now no longer prized adulators, to manœuvre into the monopoly of all the attention of these new acquisitions. But her manœuvres would have proved vain, since Rosabella's inartificial sweetness of manners, and unpretending beauty, were more to their taste; and as they sought only for the gratification of the passing moment, neither title nor wealth could preponderate against her.

As Lady Elstow was to have a rout that evening, and purposed amusing her two lovely young guests with a dance, should the male attendants of her assembly muster sufficiently strong to per-

mit it, Miss Noyes invited his lordship and Sir James to this party, who gladly acceded to her request.

When reembarked and on their return to Richmond, Lady Meliora, finding no other prize to angle for, concentrated her attention to Mr. Suckling and Captain Hawk; the former of whom, who was only making for himself "sport withal;" took this renovation of attention all in good humour, and repaid it with interest; whilst the more serious captain deemed it expedient to overcast his brow with something of the sombre gloom of jealousy, for her late evident symptoms of dereliction; and when at length arrived at Richmond, and that at the door of Lady Elstow the temporary separation took place, Mr. Suckling departed, in all the solemn woe of tender devotedness; Captain Hawk in all the stately *hauteur* of one who considered himself aggrieved.

CHAPTER IX.

INFINITE, nay, almost laborious were the pains bestowed by Lady Meliora to improve her beauty to the most resistless prowess; fully bent upon entoiling, not only Lord Marsborough and Sir James Steelthorp, but every other luckless wight, who should come within the circle of her charms that evening; whilst Rosabella paid every compliment in her power to the gifts of her kind friends Mrs. O'Dowd and Mr. Monson, by looking strikingly elegant and lovely.

The rout of Lady Elstow was numerously attended; and Mr. Suckling was amongst the earliest arrivals; when with some evident and carefully displayed manœuvring, he obtained a seat by Lady Meliora, and paid her the most marked attention, until the new acquaintances of Miss Noyes arrived from Hampton Court; and almost at the same moment,

a very young and rather pretty girl, lately emerged from a finishing establishment, and who had just presented herself as a complete beauty to the neighbourhood, who had never anticipated such an unthought-of presentation; and rather through surprise than conviction, had admitted the assumption; when instantly, in the face of the whole assembly, Mr. Suckling supinely arose, and bowing carelessly to Lady Meliora, thanked her for her kind condescension during the day; and then walking away, commenced the most conspicuous flirtation with the self-created beauty, leaving her ladyship so mortified, so irritated, by such a palpable affront and public dereliction, that with the utmost exertions only of her indignant pride could she repress a rising flood of anger's spontaneous tears.

Miss Noyes was one of the most accomplished singers of the age; she was called upon by Lady Elstow to exert her vocal enchantment, for the delight of the musical *amateurs* present; and as Lord Marsborough and Sir James Steelthorp

were devotedly of that number, Lady Meliora could not by any means succeed in luring them to her side, to pay homage to her all-surpassing beauty. As to Captain Hawk, he sat in solemn ire in an observatory he had selected, watching with a wary eye how this insulation would operate upon the vanity of this star of beauty: and not a little to his satisfaction he at length beheld an ancient widower seat himself beside her, the nuisance of all assemblies, voted by all the blooming belles of the neighbourhood an insufferable bore, since he would persist in the forgetfulness of his own age; who went about seeking out every beauty, whom through the aid of his gold mounted spectacles he could discern, in search of a young and lovely second wife; and as time had yet spared to him sufficient agility to dance and caper surprisingly, and even to waltz without vertigo, he was the constant candidate for the youngest and most celebrated beauty of every ball, to honour him with her hand. Having heard the self-elected Venus was the last come out, he strut-

ted up to her the moment he entered, to pay his evening's devoirs to her; who, not choosing to have her promising flirtation disturbed by such an annoyance, pertly exclaimed—

"I am not the *prima* beauty of the room to night, good venerable. Clear your glasses, and they will then discover for you a Milesian Venus, just arrived from Paddy's land."

"An Irish beauty! What, a Gunning, hey!" he exclaimed. "Where does the rare emerald blaze?"

"Yonder, sir," said Mr. Suckling, obligingly pointing out Lady Meliora Monson to him; "but I would rather advise the smoking of your glasses, to enable your gazing through them at the resplendent rays this emerald blazes with."

This ancient beau, callous from use to the sarcastic sneers of the young, evincing no resentment, effected a tiptoe flight of juvenility to the seat Mr. Suckling had vacated; when poor Lady Meliora, not initiated in the secret of his being the shunned of all the young and pretty,

felt sincerely grateful for his arrival, since her vanity whispered his being seated next her would appear as an excuse for no adulator finding opportunity for this enviable situation.

As Mr. Buckly felt, that being admitted into the house of Lady Elstow was a sufficient passport to addressing any one he met with beneath her ladyship's roof, he unhesitatingly commenced an elaborate speech to his fair neighbour, expressive of how singularly fortunate he deemed himself, through the most extraordinary circumstance he had ever met with—that of finding an unoccupied seat by a lady of such preeminent beauty. Lady Meliora seeming to receive this speech with encouraging complacency, Mr. Buckly, unused to such courtesy from those he elaborately complimented, was elevated to the highest pitch of his adulating gallantry; and at length was inspired to solicit the honour of her lovely hand—"for lovely he knew it was, though concealed by the enviable kid's envelopement—for the first two dances, as he had heard

it murmured through that bower of bliss, that all were to frisk in mirth's enlivening measure, 'upon the light fantastic toe.'"

"With you, sir!" replied her ladyship, looking all dismay and consternation. "Indeed, you are vastly good, and I am greatly obliged to you, sir, but, as there seems to be quite a sufficient number of male votaries of Terpsichore here, I am sure there is—not—cannot possibly exist any necessity; nor I am sure would Lady Elstow wish it—for your good nature's leading you to—to—to such a tax—such an ungenial exertion; and besides, I had forgotten, but I am engaged for the first two dances."

Mr. Buckly, highly disconcerted at the whole tenor of her speech, with cheeks glowing from mortification, replied, though rather in a tone of pique, "that he must then postpone his coveted happiness to the two following dances."

"I am engaged for them too, sir; and indeed for the whole evening," replied Lady Meliora, who having succeeded so

well in her first essay of refusal, resolved to make her second definitive.

"Come, come, most lovely lady," said this persevering beau, "this is mere coquetry; you are fond of the pastime of torturing, I perceive, and only want to drive a devoted slave to despair."

"Sir," returned her ladyship, "I am positively engaged for every dance I purpose joining in through this whole evening."

"Forgive me, if I again repeat this to be mere coquetry, most beauteous lady; since no one has approached you to solicit the superlative honour of your hand, since the vivific rumour of dancing was wafted through our delighted ears."

"Will you persist in doubting, sir, the possibility of an inmate of Lady Elstow's family knowing her ladyship's intentions by an earlier intimation than yourself?"

"I shall only acquit you of torturing coquetry, fairest of ladies, if you name the happy candidate; which, indeed, becomes necessary, as your rank demands a prompt

joining of the column, which I perceive is forming; and I may be serviceable in calling your truant elected to his shamefully neglected duty."

"I thank you," said Lady Meliora, beginning to lose all patience, in being thus annoyed, and in her painful amazement at no one yet having appeared, as a competitor with this odious persecutor; "but you must excuse my condescending to summon any truant partner."

"By all that is fascinating, I adore your spirit; but evince it even greater still—fairest of Heaven-formed creatures, by conferring your beauteous hand upon me, and leaving the miscreant defaulter to the bitter pangs of anguished disappointment, as the due punishment of his enormous disloyalty."

This persecution was more than Lady Meliora, unused to any thing in the form of annoyance, could longer brook; and starting from her seat to take refuge from such torment by the side of her grandmother, Captain Hawk stood before her.

"Lady Meliora," he exclaimed, bowing

profoundly, " I trust your goodness will excuse my truancy, in not appearing to claim the honour of your promised hand; but my detention was involuntary, and will bear the test of explanation, when we join the forming column, which we had better sacrifice no time in doing,—although your place being defined, we have not lost ground by my unavoidable delay."

Her ladyship, with an enchanting smile of gratitude gave her hand to the captain, now performing an able general, and hastened to her place, amid the female nobility assembled; where impatiently she requested to know how he had so opportunely appeared, and gifted with inspiration to rescue her from torment.

" Why," he replied, with all the proper accompaniments of tender modulation of voice, and glances of the eyes, " you are not now to learn the feast my enthralled soul delights to feed on. I therefore quickly perceived that phantom of gallantry presume to take a seat, which, from your torturing cruelties of the morning, I feared to occupy; when soon by

the most eloquent of all expressive countenances, perceiving you were not pleased with his conversation—in my zeal to discover if it was such as to demand male interference, I cautiously proceeded to the recess of the window behind you; where soon discovering what his insolent perseverance purposed to effect, I was induced to present myself as your affianced partner, hoping the urgency of the case would plead in extenuation of my presumption."

"Extenuation! Why I am under an incalculable obligation to you," she replied; "and must further trespass on your kindness in extricating me from his future annoyance; since to secure myself from the possibility of dancing at all with the old animal, I pretended engagements through the whole evening; and cannot draw on Miss Noyes for aid; as after dinner to day, when the first intimation of this intended dance transpired, she deplored with so much asperity the hard duty she should have to perform, in making idle men dance, and in procuring partners for those who expected to figure about,

but could not allure them for themselves, that some how, unluckily as it has turned out, I gave myself saucy airs, and told her, 'I should not increase her trouble; and after what she had said, I should consider it an insult to my attractions, did she attempt the introduction of any partner to me. After that, you know, I must submit to any inconvenience, sooner than sneak down from my high war-horse."

"Let me see what can be done then," replied the wily wooer, affecting to ponder; "why, I really see nothing, but for you to condescend to allow of my being your partner for every other set; and surely your own surpassing attractions must effect the rest."

"Nay, my best friend, my condescension will be performed with joyful gratitude; but as to my other performance, I, alas! perceive no ray of hope for that, since my attractions seem very powerless this night. Mr. Suckling, you see, has taken French leave of me; the two knights conjured up by Miss Noyes' incantations in the morning, have contented

themselves with a simple bend to me; and his lordship you see has selected Rosa for his partner, and the baronet Miss Noyes."

"All retaliation for your *jeu d'esprit* in the morning, and your bravado of doing without her introduction of partners! Miss Noyes is too clever not to carry on her retaliations with spirit; and too well skilled in manœuvring, not to contrive, by the process of even confession, to bind her enchanted knights to fealty, through this evening at least; for whatever his lordship might do, to select your tolerably pretty friend, Sir James could not be in his sane mind to choose Miss Noyes,—was he not spell-bound,—where transcendent beauty might be worshipped."

"Most soothingly have you accounted for all this," said Lady Meliora, her brilliant eyes emitting rays of dazzling resplendency at this gratifying solution—"so now, do pray find some palliating consolation for my vanity, by your view of Mr. Suckling's dereliction."

"Ah! surely you can be at no loss

for the solution of that? Does not conscience whisper, that your mischievous display of preference to others this morning might operate in reprisal, where the heart was not too much devoted not to silence its resentments, and to feast on every ray of returning hope, as I do. But, independent of that, I conceive Mr. Suckling is of the despicable tribe of male coquets; for, after his apparently eager devotion to that pert and bold looking chit, you see he has suddenly deserted her, to adulate with equal fervency that pretty French child Madame la *Comtesse* brought hither, and should Miss Noyes have a nursling to introduce, rely on it we shall see him fly off to dandle that."

Lady Meliora, now in absence of other expected adulators, as an exhilarating cordial for her drooping vanity, gratefully, and with eagerness too, gave into the management of Captain Hawk, for their wearing the appearance through the evening of devoted reciprocal attachment; and thus repelling every other inclining admirer—even obliging Captain Hawk to

seek out partners for her, to rescue her from the fangs of the watchful Mr. Buckly.

Although Lady Meliora was thus imprudently employed, she did not fail to observe how other beauties fared, and had the mortification to perceive the untitled, portionless Rosabella, the selected choice of the prime partners assembled; whilst the eye of general admiration followed her wheresoever she went, whether she was stationary, or whether engaged with grace and agile elegance of movement in the merry dance. But soon consoling herself that this influx of partners was secured through the management of the retaliating Miss Noyes, she fancied she was reconciled to the matter; not once conceiving, that Rosa charmed all, by evincing no expectation of being admired; and that the unaffected ease, with which she carried the partial favours of nature about her, proved a fascination of resistless attraction. At length, perceiving Rosa seated at the commencement of a new set, her ladyship, almost hoping it was caused by

lack of a partner, flew towards her to demand, " why she was so lazy?"

" Is it not possible," replied Rosa, smiling, " to become weary, even in the path of pleasure?"

Lady Meliora, conceiving this response a mere evasion to conceal her having at length shared in the fate of neglect, exclaimed—

" Nonsense! You wearied by dancing a few short country dances! You, that ran two Irish miles without ever drawing breath, to tell the woman who had dropped down in a fit, at the report of her son being killed by a fall from a rock, that he was taken up unhurt."

As this statement trenched not on *rivalité* in beauty's allurements, Lady Meliora not only unhesitatingly made it, but found pleasure in recounting the humanity of her friend.

" But this only proves," said Lord Marsborough, stepping out of the set of dancers, where he had been standing on inactive duty, sufficiently near to her ladyship, " that Miss Frederick finds the path

of pitying compassion less fatiguing, or perhaps more genial to her wish of progress in it, than that of Terpsichore."

"No such thing," said Lady Meliora; "they are equally genial to her wish of progress; but for goodness sake, child, allow not the air of England to transform you into an affected lackadaizical; for you will not be half so accommodatingly pleasant:—so come, as a proof of repentance of this first tendency to artificial finery, allow Captain Hawk to try and get a partner for you."

"I need not trespass on Captain Hawk's kindness," replied Rosa, "since there exists an invincible interdict to my dancing this present set."

"Or Miss Frederick," said Lord Marsborough, "would have found no occasion for trespassing on the kindness of Captain Hawk; since I was amongst the numerous candidates for the honour of her hand."

"Oh! if there has been a decree issued by arbitrary Fate against your dancing this particular set, I have done," replied Lady

Meliora, blushing; and, finding her suspicion of the cause of Rosa's inaction unjust, her wish for teasing her to dance evaporated. Promptly now she rejoined the *corps de ballet*, where soon, to her infinite surprise, she beheld Mr. Suckling approach Rosabella with an air of humility; and Rosa, the child of meekness, draw up with an air of towering pride, well calculated for the personification of imperial dignity; saw him take a chair by Rosa, and address some words very seriously to her, who with glowing cheeks replied to him with unbending *hauteur*, and then with a stately air arose, and removed her station to the corner of a card-table in an adjoining room.

The conclusion her ladyship now drew from all her observation informed her of was, that Mr. Suckling had offended Rosabella by a breach of some dancing engagement; and much she marvelled at her, so mild as she was, evincing such powerful resentment, and he—proud as he seemed—so much humble contrition for it; and the moment they retired to their

chamber that night—which was not at a very protracted period, as Lady Elstow was too primitive, and too much of an invalide, to patronise waltzing or late hours, so that few, from the prohibition of the former, were inclined to trespass to the latter—she began unmercifully to banter our heroine, upon the rapid acquirement of all the airs, and graces, and imperious *hauteur* of a professed beauty and fine lady,—ridicule which, although Rosa felt pained through its being flung by the shaft of a beloved friend, yet she took in perfect serenity of temper; and allowed no sarcasm levelled at her by Lady Meliora upon her new line of conduct, to elicit from her any explanation that might retaliate a wound.

CHAPTER X.

On the subsequent morning, not only the wily Captain Hawk, but Miss Noyes' two knights from Hampton Court arrived, to pay their respects to Lady Elstow, and their devoirs to some of her inmates; when Lady Meliora renewed, but with more graceful playfulness of manner, and less poignancy in her satire, her attack upon Rosabella, for her magnificence to poor humbled Mr. Suckling; and requested Lord Marsborough to gratify her curiosity, if possibly in his power, by imparting to her the mystery, which consigned Miss Frederick to inaction for two dances.

"Miss Frederick informed me, when I requested the honour of dancing with her the set your ladyship alludes to," Lord Marsborough replied, "that having found cause to refuse a gentleman for that very set, and without the subterfuge of pleading

an engagement, she therefore was compelled to sit by those dances; and to avoid attracting observation to the circumstance, she should plead fatigue as the motive of her doing so."

"Oh! mercy, mercy, what will this world come to, since Rosa affects what she does not feel?" exclaimed Lady Meliora. "Why, at Ravenswood she was so very primitive, that she considered it an absolute crime, to excuse herself upon any occasion, in any form that she could not testify as fact. Ah! well might Mr. Sternham predict, that our emerging from our conservation at Ravenswood menaced destruction to our morals."

Lord Marsborough now looked earnestly on Lady Meliora, with beams betraying an approach to admiration; for now he thought she must absolutely be, what he had through the preceding morning denied—very beautiful, since twice she had surprised him with an appearance of being exquisitely so, when with unaffected animation, she proclaimed the long race of her lovely friend in the cause of humanity;

and now, as she pronounced this friend's devotedness to truth.

"But," continued Lady Meliora, "his lordship's account convicts you merely of framing an excuse for your inaction, that was not the real motive for it; so now, as the offender is not present, do impart to us his mighty crime and misdemeanor."

"Miss Frederick is possessed of too much of the essence of charity, to proclaim the misdeeds of a transgressor to all the world," said Miss Noyes, starting from her chair, and affecting business at a table near where her ladyship was seated, to whom she contrived to say unheard by any of the party besides—

"Ask no further questions to distress your friend,—the solution would not gratify you."

Her ladyship deeply blushed, and started a new subject, although resolved to bring Rosa to confession the moment they should be *tête à tête* in their chamber that night.

The visitors from Hampton Court made something approaching to a visitation, but

their sojourn was far exceeded by Captain Hawk's, who outstaid every one who called, and those callers were rather numerous.

Lady Derville had arranged for returning home that morning, but her hospitable hostess prevailed for postponing her little journey until the less sultry evening, which afforded Captain Hawk an opportunity of offering his services as an escort home, to lull Lady Meliora's apprehensions of an attack from banditti; and upon his offer being gratefully accepted, Lady Elstow felt it incumbent upon her accommodating *politesse*, to invite this voluntary champion to dinner, who joyfully acceded to this hoped-for hospitality. After coffee the party set out for town, under the pleasing prospect of visiting Richmond soon again, as Lady Derville had commissioned her friend to take a house for her, as near her own as possible; where she would remain during her stay in England, as there with facility she could procure those masters from town she wished for, to perfect her darling's education; some of whom she

purposed kindly to allow her *protégée* the advantage of; whilst practising with Miss Noyes she considered would prove of incalculable improvement to their vocal taste and execution.

Captain Hawk set out on horseback attended by his groom, but after crossing Richmond Bridge, complaining that the noise of the landau prevented his hearing what they honoured him by addressing to him, Lady Meliora proposed his coming into the carriage; and as it was her darling's proposition, although she thought he would have proved better protection as an equestrian, Lady Derville made no objection. During their ride to town, he could not devote his attention exclusively to the object of his determined pursuit, yet his eyes were active agents for him in paying her unceasing homage; whilst listening to all he could contrive to address particularly to her seemed Lady Meliora's only anxiety.

At length they arrived in Sloane Street, and the imprudent Meliora invited their obliging escort to take his tea with them;

and scarcely had Lady Derville ceased her inquiries for Mr. Sternham, who, she learned by a letter left for her from him, was gone, through the summons of an express, to Dunstable—to attend the dying moments of his oldest friend, taken ill on his route by Liverpool from Ireland—when Lord Derville arrived, bringing with him all of their party from Berkshire, save Captains Duncombe and Neville, who still remained in that county, to attend the nuptials of the latter's sister, which were to take place the following day.

"But, they will be up for the *fête*," said Mrs. O'Dowd, smiling expressively at Rosa, "and if Alèrmont and I can bring a snug party to bear we are meditating to the Continent, Captain Duncombe is to accompany us; and to perform our guide on an elegant tour to Paris, and Brussels, and Valenciennes, where I shall get such lovely lace, and silks, and cambric, that I have quite set my heart on the measure; and so, my honey dear Lady Derville, you must spare your two bright stars to me, to light us on our way."

"Your heart cannot be set more on the measure than mine," exclaimed Lady Meliora, "for go with you I will, that's *poz*."

"Oh! how I envy—or rather, *almost* envy—since I never yet found myself sufficiently tempted to experience that execrable passion," said Miss Standard, who, when the freak of Lady Meliora had left two places vacant in the carriage of the O'Dowds, had, with her brother, Captain Standard, been invited to join the party; "how I almost envy you this great good fortune in such an eligible and advantageous invitation, Miss Frederick! Some individuals are amazingly lucky, but I am not one of those favourites of fortune; and I may live to hobble off the theatre of life on crutches, ere any one will compassionate my strong desire for improvement, by beholding the rich mines of taste's instruction which the Louvre contains; with long &c. of incalculable benefits to one's mental stores, by inviting me to join a party like this."

"I'll tell you how to manage it," ex-

claimed Miss Acres, nodding her head sneeringly towards Rosa; "make a conquest of a rich man, who will either take you on the Continent himself, or cause your being taken by some accommodating friend."

"But, you see, Miss Acres," said Captain O'Dowd, gravely, "that without adopting this promising plan of yours, Miss Frederick will be taken to Paris, if she will condescend to go."

"Condescend!!" exclaimed Miss Acres, contemptuously. "*Condescend* indeed!! Well, that is a monstrous good one! Will a duck swim?"

"As assuredly as a magpie will chatter," said Mrs. O'Dowd; "so I trust my two young ducklings will be allowed to swim across the channel with the protecting duck and drake of the brood of the O'Dowds, as soon as the senate of grave talking birds have discussed the propriety of granting permission."

"Propriety or not," exclaimed Lady Meliora, "I will go, since you will take me."

"And what says Rosa?" demanded Mr. O'Dowd.

"Why," replied our heroine, smiling and blushing, "Rosa must await the decision of the senate."

Mrs. O'Dowd soon contrived to draw Rosabella off to a *tête à tête*; first to sing forth, in the highest strains of panegyric, the praise of Captain Duncombe's house, establishment, himself, and elegant attentive hospitality; and then to consult her upon the important subject of their dress for the *fête*; and to learn all that Lady Flowerdew had let transpire about the proper style of costume.

This, to Mrs. O'Dowd important topic, would not speedily have terminated, had not Lady Wilemore arrived to take charge of her niece home; who, after a long and elaborate flourish of thanks to her dear "honey," and Captain O'Dowd, for their *parental* kindness to her sweet Alinda; and a manœuvring sail round the room, complimenting and thanking every one; and adroitly whispering Lady Meliora, "to have mercy on her two poor

nephews, who were both *distractedly* in love with her;" she hurried away her precious wares, to gratify her painful impatience to learn, if the excursion into Berkshire had turned up any fortunate card for their speculating advantage.

The very moment this hawker of human treasures had quitted the room, and before they could have completed their descent of the stairs, Miss Acres commenced a strain of the most violent invectives against the whole race, "as an odious pack, a detestable set, a stupid tribe, &c. &c.;" and above all, Mr. Edward she pronounced as her particular abomination, "since he had no more manners than a sea-hog—devising for her amusement, the whole of the first day they were out, the praises of Lady Meliora's beauty."

"That was indeed injudicious, at least," said Captain O'Dowd. "I thought a sailor understood the charts of gallantry better, than to sail for the port of one lady's favor, through the dangerous channel of another's praise."

"But the port of my favor he was nei-

ther making for, nor shall ever arrive at; a beast! And what was her beauty to me? I was not going to market with it:—but, had I not contrived another method of stopping his rudeness, I would have slapped his impertinent chops for it."

"My dear Miss Acres!" exclaimed Mrs. Allworthy, who had arrived for her charge, now flying to her, and drawing her aside, to endeavour to lecture her into something more of the semblance of refinement: but all would not do; the spirits of Miss Acres had been elevated by her excursion, beyond the restraints which her guardian had hoped Mrs. Allworthy would have found means to acquire over her; and soon dashing away from this unpalatable conference, she exclaimed—

"Don't you believe you will ever prose me into a mincing puppet, like Miss Vandelure; the rare work of your fine polishing arts, to be moved only by the actuating strings of elegance and propriety. All nonsense and deceit! Sure, I have four thousand pounds per annum in landed property, left me by my father; besides my

uncle Giles' legacy of the fat farms of Fallowdown, Buttersfield, Cropland, Harrowmede, and Heifersrill; the manors of Rabbitsborough, Crowpeck, Longwood, and Marlbury; with the freeholds of Potwollop, Yeanay, and Fairpromise; and that's refinement and accomplishment enough for any girl: and so I told Mr. Edward, the sea-hog! and whilst I can stand, or walk, or run over such a tract as that of my own; and can dance to the pleasant tune of 'money in both pockets,' I will neither go nor be driven to do any one thing I do not like."

At length, to the infinite relief of Lady Derville and Rosa,—who both felt fatigued from the last night's gay revel—but to the regret of Lady Meliora,—who now could scarcely endure the cup of flattery's absence from her thirsting lip—the party all took leave; and shortly after, Lady Meliora and our heroine retired to their chamber, her ladyship panting for the gratification of her curiosity relative to Rosa's mystery of the preceding night, which Miss Noyes had so painfully augmented;

and our heroine, all kind and affectionate anxiety to venture upon a discussion which friendship urged her to, whilst experience whispered, she should too probably only offend by it. However, the inspirations of duty conquered every other feeling in the bosom of Rosabella; and after Betty had left them to a *tête à tete*, she with a palpitating heart commenced her unpromising undertaking.

CHAPTER XI.

"My beloved Meliora," said Rosabella, "will forgive my presumption, when assured that all I am about to take the liberty of saying, is the inspiration of the most fervent and genuine affection. May I then venture upon the liberty of asking you, if you have conquered your attachment to Lord Montalbert, and mean to bestow your hand upon Captain Hawk?"

Lady Meliora, who always lingered a considerable time before the looking-glass, after the departure of Betty each night; now started from the reflected image of beauty, and turned her eyes with the flash of indignant ire upon Rosabella, as scornfully she exclaimed—

"Me, conquer my attachment to the godlike Montalbert!!! *Me*, bestow *my* hand upon Captain Hawk!!! A pretty degrading match you have projected for

me indeed, most affectionate Miss Rosabella! What, I suppose, because the manœuvring toad-eater, Miss Noyes, prevented the men last night from following their own inclinations by dancing with me, you kindly conceive I must be at my last prayers for a husband, and glad therefore to carry a knapsack."

"I know not of any manœuvring of Miss Noyes, to deprive you of partners:—nay, I am convinced she practised none; since, believe me, Meliora, the manœuvring was all Captain Hawk's."

"Captain Hawk's!! No, you cruelly defame him: for he kindly procured partners for me; when Miss Noyes instructed them not to dance with me, because I interdicted her aid, lest, when my back was turned, she should scold about the trouble I had given her, as she did about the trouble she had in expectation."

"Pardon me, my dear Meliora, if I assert, and that most positively, the management of Captain Hawk, to convince every individual present that you were

affianced lovers, deterred other men from paying those attentions to you, they else would have eagerly offered."

"Impossible," said Lady Meliora, flattered into decrease of indignation by this consoling suggestion. "Impossible; no one could presume to degrade me by a supposition, that I, with birth, fortune, beauty, talents, and accomplishments, would sacrifice all to a mere captain of cavalry, with only a few hundreds a year private fortune,—for, notwithstanding your bad opinion of him, he honourably told me that,—and the man, too, not sufficiently handsome to extenuate so mad a measure."

"Indeed," said Rosa, "many degraded you last night by such a supposition; for with my own ears, I heard many individuals pronounce you lovers on the point of marriage; and men calling you Tantalus' fruit."

"Upon my word, Miss Rosa, I feel particularly flattered by your asserting, that my own conduct confirmed my degradation. However, I must say, had you

even one particle of that friendship you *profess* for me, you would boldly have contradicted so scandalous a report. When you were insulted yourself, you could resent. When Mr. Suckling offended your mighty majesty, you could resent for yourself, with the indignant ire of imperial pride."

"Are you clear the offence I so resented was offered to myself?" demanded Rosa, mildly.

"Clear: since people seldom yield amusement, or cloud their beauteous brows in anger, in their zeal for others."

"In true friendship such zeal may be found, I doubt not," responded Rosa.

"Why," demanded her ladyship, a little electrified by a sudden pang of apprehension, that Rosa's unusual indignation had been awakened on her account; "why, was it—could it be, any impertinence about me, that made you so very angry?"

Rosa was silent.

"Nay, I insist on knowing."

"It is not my wish, believe me, ever to say any thing to distress you," replied the

affectionate Rosabella; "but perhaps it may be a better proof of my friendship to tell you all; as it may yield conviction, that suffering the attentions of Captain Hawk so conspicuously, is an injury to you."

Lady Meliora now seated herself in an approximate chair, trembling with apprehension of hearing, that some insult had been offered to her matchless charms.

"Mr. Suckling," said Rosa, "had the presumption to say,—and near enough to me for my suffering the mortification of hearing him — in reply to that girl he flew from you to adulate, who had affectedly exclaimed—'That lady something, from Ireland, is quite smitten by that staring captain.'

"'What, Lady Meliora Monson? Oh! she is such an egregiously vain fool, she would be instantly smitten with any man, who could sacrifice his intellect to the amusement of making fine speeches to her. Why, I found her so near the brink of love's precipice for me, that, through compassion to that poor fellow, who wants her

cash, egad! I was compelled to fly and leave the field to him, which I perceive he has already won.'

"As I was standing with my back to them at the moment all this was uttered, when I turned suddenly round, and fixed my eyes upon him, beaming with the indignation he had awakened, he was overwhelmed with the most evident confusion; whilst the Miss tittered, and elegantly assailed his side with her elbow, as she lowly articulated—

"'This is a scrape! What will you do?'"

"'Oh! I shall soon contrive to make my peace,' he replied, in the same low murmur.

"Shortly after, that set terminated, and he had the further insolence to suppose, a tribute to my vanity would prove a peace-offering; for he had the effrontery to ask me to dance—I proudly declined, without pleading engagement.

"Mr. Suckling blushed deeply, and retreated, muttering something of misconception of what had been said; and re-

turned almost immediately to me, accompanied by Miss Noyes, to assure me, 'I had, by partially hearing what was said, mistaken its purport.'

"'That my hearing was partial, I own,' I replied, 'but it was that partiality awakened by conviction of the excellence of the head and heart of her I heard so unjustly and wantonly ridiculed.'

"In short, Miss Noyes could not succeed in making his peace; for although I despised the transgressor, I could not forgive him; and in a quarter of an hour, which I suppose he passed in the composition of it, he returned with a fine set speech of apology; but as its tone was that of his own extenuation at your expense, I left him in the middle of it."

A loud sob of Lady Meliora's now proclaimed to Rosa—who, sitting up in her bed, had given this narrative—that her friend was weeping.

"My beloved Meliora," exclaimed our heroine, springing from her bed and flying to her, "do not cry about it; but in future, do not, by bestowing attention

upon fools and coxcombs, allow them to fabricate shrines for incense to their own detestable vanity."

"Oh! I must, I will cry; and, like poor Niobe, I shall be drowned in my tears," sobbed out Lady Meliora, throwing her arms around Rosa's neck, "to think such cruel, ill-natured, and mortifying things should be said of me:—of me, who never, never, loved any man in my whole life, but Lord Montalbert, to whom my heart is so devotedly attached, that it would break in six weeks, was any thing to occur to prevent my union with him."

"Since such are your feelings relative to Lord Montalbert," said Rosabella, "do not yourself prove the means of breaking off your union, by a continuation of encouragement to Captain Hawk; for can you be certain you have no observer who may spread abroad your apparent devotion to this man; and should Lord Montalbert chance to hear of it, can you suppose the consequence could prove favourable to your attachment?"

"Why surely, Rosa, his lordship must

conclude I could not mope about like one forlorn,—just as if I could find no one on the surface of the earth to admire me during his absence—and therefore, that I merely condescended to flirt with this man to beguile the cheerless moments of our separation."

"Oh!" said Rosa, "I fear that suggestion would rather retard than promote your union with his lordship. Few thinking men would venture to embark upon the hazardous ocean of wedlock with a woman, whose thirst for admiration would not permit her to exist, during any temporary absence of his, without a *cicisbeo*: for he would fear, that neither prudence nor delicacy held its perfect jurisdiction in a bosom, where vanity could possess such misleading influence. No, my beloved Meliora, your flirtation with Captain Hawk cannot be thus extenuated; the heart that Lord Montalbert seeks, he will expect to find in the crystal shrine that purity consecrates to connubial love."

"Rosa, I will never more speak to

Hawk. You shall forbid him the house to-morrow for me."

"Softly, but steadily, my dear Meliora —Captain Hawk, although I am firmly persuaded I may pronounce him a designing man, who has spun his subtle snares around to entoil you,—has not been detected in any thing to call forth so violent a measure. You must yourself destroy the hopes your unfortunate encouragement has but too naturally led his presumption to shelter, by gradually withdrawing your attentions from him. And with unfaltering firmness, —yet tempered with mildness—this must be accomplished; for, after such encouragement as yours has imprudently although inadvertently been, yours, my beloved friend, is, I fear, a difficult task to counteract it. Your guardian might fail in destroying hopes that you have raised. Male interference cannot, without manifest danger——"

"Indeed, Rosa, I have given him no hope whatever," exclaimed Lady Meliora, impatiently interrupting her, "for although,

during the last few days, he has seized every opportunity of making the most ardent, undisguised love to me, I have invariably pronounced his declarations nonsense, and that I had no heart to give him; but still he would not believe me:—and so, as you see he will not attend to my discouragement, I am sure the only plan must be, forbidding him the house."

"I very much fear this is a more difficult case, than you and I are competent to act in. You must therefore, to an absolute certainty, confide all to Lady Derville to-morrow," said Rosabella, now trembling in alarm. "Your having listened with complacency to him, after his unequivocal avowals of attachment, may have constituted a dangerous species of encouragement, not easily to be overcome."

"For the sake of mercy, Rosa, do not terrify me out of my wits!" exclaimed Lady Meliora, ceasing to weep, and looking perfectly aghast. "Surely, you do not mean to insinuate the dire occurrence of any fatal catastrophe, like that we read

of in a newspaper, when we were little girls,—and that Hawk will shoot me, and then himself?"

"Why no," returned Rosa, smiling as she shuddered; "I think Captain Hawk prizes life too much, and you too little, to be the perpetrator of so terrible a catastrophe: but law is sometimes resorted to in such kind of cases; and to have your name brought before the public, in a trial for——I know not what he might conjure it into,—would—"

Would be almost as bad as shooting me," cried her now trembling ladyship, impatiently. "Nay, worse than shooting me, since depriving me of the esteem of the matchless Montalbert would be consigning me to a lingering death. But really, this horrible idea of your suggestion makes me sincerely sorry I ever encouraged this man, by listening to his love; but, you know I could not close my ears whilst he persisted in uttering his tender strains; and besides, I always understood it to be the privilege of beauty, to make scores of men—miserable for life,

without ever having one's humanity in the least implicated: and I know such achievements were predicted for me, as a matter of course, when a mere babe in leading strings; for one of the earliest things my memory clings to, is, hearing the nurses, and every servant about Ravenswood, incessantly declare, 'my face would make many a man's heart ache.'"

"It is too late to-night to argue upon the justice of giving to beauty the power of the basilisk," said Rosa; "but, I trust your memory, my dear Meliora, may prove as retentive to the necessity of a new and cautious course towards Captain Hawk; and that your reflections on your pillow may lead you to seek counsel from your affectionate grandmother, who must be more competent to the task of advising you than I am."

"I am not clear of that," replied Lady Meliora; "for you, I am confident, will never involve yourself in such a scrape, as this may possibly prove of mine; and grandmama ought to have prepared me for avoiding such dangerous shoals, ere

she allowed my entrance on the sea of life."

"As to me," said Rosa, not enduring that any censure, however merited, should rest upon her beloved benefactress, "I shall of course most probably benefit by example, and not through my own superior powers of mind; whilst, as to being prepared for such shoals as this you have run upon, Lady Derville believed the wisest way was, that of instilling every good and virtuous principle into your heart, and that would prove your security."

"Ah! Rosa, like the packing case poor Terry took from the stores at Ravenswood, to convey his best livery &c. to London, because it looked clean and neat, and appeared without flaw; but he forgot that strength was requisite for the journey; and when called into use it was found unsuited to the purpose; and in defiance of every fair promise of appearance, the first rough blow it was assailed by shattered poor Terry's expectations from his prize. Ah! Charles was right; we ought

to have benefited by the salutary lessons presented by an intercourse with society, as you will be by my faulty example, Rosa; and not to have been left in total ignorance of the temptations that might assail us, or of the mental strength and knowledge that could lead us to resist them."

And now, having found an excuse for her own inexcusable conduct towards Captain Hawk, the consolation it afforded to her painful mortification in having acted reprehensibly soon composed the aspect of Lady Meliora to so much apparent calmness, that Rosabella very shortly was at full liberty to retire once more to her bed.

But, although this composure, reared for a time upon the conviction of another being more faulty than herself, permitted Lady Meliora to seek her pillow too, yet there the remembrance of Mr. Suckling's insulting opinion of her quickly recurred like a frightful sprite to banish rest from that pillow, and to torture her mind with every pang of mortified vanity and

wounded delicacy; so that when her tenderly attached friend sprung up in the morning, to prepare for attending Lady Derville to the Foundling Chapel, to hear a popular preacher, she informed her, "that her head ached so much from fretting about Mr. Suckling's impertinence, that she could not possibly go to church."

"But," her ladyship added, "only tell grandmama I am merely lazy, and want to save myself for to-morrow's *fête*; and as you and she will remain *tête à tête* during this long ride—do you, on your return—since I would not have her devotion disturbed by such a disagreeable communication—impart to her all my perplexity relative to Captain Hawk; and learn what she advises upon the subject; but remember, if Mr. Sternham is to be summoned into council, I will run restiff at once. In the mean time, should Captain Hawk call, I shall of course be denied to him; and shall keep *perdue* in my chamber the whole morning, not even venturing to the park, lest I should encounter him."

Distressing as this commission was, Rosabella was pleased that it was confided to her; since, however leniently she might represent the imprudence of her friend, she was well aware Lady Derville would come much nearer to the important facts, than by Lady Meliora's own statement.

The communications of the gentle and affectionate Rosabella overwhelmed the adoring grandmother with distress, embarrassment, and dismay. She feared, with her *protégée*, that Captain Hawk had spun his toils so subtly round the inexperienced Lady Meliora, that it would require better management than her own to extricate her, without unpleasant consequences. Male interference was too dangerous to be thought of; hers, Lady Derville feared, would only lead him to the adoption of some more serious arts and stratagems; and from seeking the aid of friends she revolted; since this would be to betray the reprehensible imprudence of her darling, and lay her open to much deserved censure.

Although long was the way from the

Foundling to Sloane Street, Lady Derville and her *protégée* had not time for half the consultation the urgency of the case required; and when the carriage stopped at their home, the only hope their wishes had to rest upon for terminating this dangerous as improper flirtation was, through the promise of Lady Meliora, to commence her plan of discouragement by confining herself in her chamber that morning.

CHAPTER XII.

But cruelly and unexpectedly was this hope destroyed, by an electric shock of astonishment that assailed them both, when, on entering the drawing rooms upon their return, they had the grief and dismay of beholding this very identical Captain Hawk, seated on a *chaise longue* by Lady Meliora, in easy, playful conversation with her.

An event had occurred during the night in one of the adjoining houses, to cause that part of the street to be covered with straw; so that the carriage had stopped, without those above, engaged in animated flirtation, from hearing it; and the street-door being open to answer a ring for the kitchen, no signal was made of their approach; so that Lady Derville appeared as an appalling apparition before her incorrigibly imprudent grandaughter, who

started from the *chaise longue* the moment she beheld her, and so did Captain Hawk; who however, with promptly rallied self-possession, changed the motive of his rising to the appearance of respect; and, with the profound bow of courtesy, he attempted to take the hand of Lady Derville, to lead her to the seat he just had arisen from; but her ladyship with recoiling *hauteur* withdrew her hand, and turning gravely to her grandaughter, she said—

"I must confess, Lady Meliora, I did not expect to find you in the drawing room, nor in such close conference with any man *now* in England."

Captain Hawk started, changed colour, and walked towards a window. Lady Derville continued—

"Was it for this snug *tête à tête* you excused yourself from your sacred duties, that Captain Hawk might make you the confident of his passion for Miss Noyes, perhaps, or some other friend of yours; or you to make him yours of—but hold!

young ladies' secrets must not be betrayed so unnecessarily; therefore I will not be the trumpet to proclaim it."

Captain Hawk still kept his face turned to the window, but his frame was visibly agitated; and Lady Meliora, after an effort to regain her power of articulation, said—

"Indeed, grandmama, it was not for a conference of this nature I admitted Captain Hawk: since, for my part, I placed that confidence in him before I went to Richmond; but I received him in your absence to answer a note he sent to my room; as he had been offered some tickets for the Royal Gallery for to-morrow, and wished to consult with me upon the number our party might require."

"Captain Hawk was extremely obliging," responded Lady Derville; "but we shall not have occasion to avail ourselves of his polite attention, as Lady Elstow was kind enough to obtain for me as many tickets as could be requisite."

Captain Hawk now muttering his great

concern at not being allowed the gratification of being useful to her ladyship, and casting a look of mingled upbraiding and despondence at Lady Meliora, hastily departed; and Rosabella, believing it right to retire, and leave her two agitated friends to an unwitnessed conference, was about to quit the room, when Lady Derville exclaimed—

"Do not go my dear, until you make your acknowledgments to Lady Meliora Monson for the kind *hoax* she has wittily treated you with, in sending you as her embassadress to me, with pleasing communications of errors and perplexities she had involved herself in, and wished for my aid in extricating her from; at the same time that they were a recreation, she had determined by no means to relinquish."

Lady Meliora flew to Lady Derville, threw her arms around her neck, and bursting into tears, sobbed out—

"Lecture me; reprobate my conduct as much as you think proper; but do not—do not say I was insincere in the com-

mission I gave my dear Rosabella. I was —I am serious in my wish to have this man discouraged."

"Then, if sincere in this point," demanded Lady Derville, a little softened from her high displeasure by her darling's tears—"why, after expressing your prudent intention of not being visible to him, until some line was marked out for you to recede by, and after orders had been issued to the domestics for not admitting any one, did I find him experiencing the unequivocal encouragement of a familiar *tête à tête* with you?"

"Oh! grandmama, it was all occasioned by that beautiful note he sent me; importuning to see me—and by my—indeed, I will conceal nothing from you and Rosa — by my having, just at the moment of its arrival, completed my toilet; and thinking, as I looked so uncommonly well, it would be a very great pity, 'to blush unseen, and waste my sweetness on the desert air;' so those two untoward circumstances conspired, to make

me at first waver, and then to break my prudent resolution."

"I should like to see that note, I must own," said Lady Derville, "it might lead me to form some idea of how far the man conceives he has met encouragement. Have you any objection to my reading it?"

"None, grandmama; although I fear you will consider it too foolishly tender, too romantically passionate, for me to be so pleased with it."

"Oh! Meliora!" exclaimed her agitated guardian, pale with alarm; "and is it possible you were drawn by a direct love billet, a tender passionate address, from your prudent resolution, into a *tête à tête* with him? This was indeed encouragement, that must lead him to disbelieve my simple assertion of other attachment; or to believe that you are a jilt of the very first magnitude; and must lead me to conclude the attachment, you proclaimed having formed for Lord Montalbert, an ideal one."

"No, madam, no," exclaimed Lady Meliora, suddenly ceasing to weep, and clasping her hands with solemn energy; "you wrong my powers of discrimination by this belief; for, firm as rests our faith on Heaven, so true, so tender, so unalienable is my affection for Lord Montalbert; and so interwoven is now my every hope of happiness in my union with him, that could any thing occur to overthrow that basis I have formed for my earthly felicity, you too soon would be fatally convinced of what an attachment mine was."

"Well," said Lady Derville, tears trembling in her eyes, at the horrible suggestion of her, in possibility, surviving her idol; "I have often heard the heart of woman pronounced a puzzle, posing even the most sage philosophers to expound; therefore, I cannot pretend to define how the same heart can contain so devoted an attachment to one man, and find such resistless charms in the society of another;—but this digression has led me from my object of perusing

this attractive note; which, like the notes of the Syren, drew you to the fatal shore possibly to meet destruction."

Lady Meliora turned to the *chaise longue* where they had been seated, to look for it; but there it was not, and after the most diligent search it could no where be found; although Lady Meliora acknowledged she had brought it from her room, to ask Captain Hawk to tell her a word she could not decipher.

"Then it is plain," said Lady Derville, at length, "that he took it away with him; having reason, I conclude, for not wishing that his own hand-writing should rise in judgment against him, if a better speculation should cross his path. You, I trust, silly, infatuated girl! have not committed yourself by ever addressing any thing in writing to him."

"I never had an opportunity, ma'am," returned Lady Meliora, dryly; almost inclined to indignant wrath with her grandmother, for addressing to her so inapplicable a term, as "silly girl."

"That, at least, is fortunate; since

it would not facilitate your wishes relative to Lord Montalbert, to have the exact degree of encouragement you have given to Captain Hawk made a question before a jury."

Lady Meliora, blanching to the paleness of death at this suggestion, was just bursting into a flood of tears, when a loud sounding of the knocker rallied her spirits, by announcing the approach of visitors; but, apprehending too many traces of recent agitation remained, not to dim the lustre of her irresistibility, she determined upon retreating to recover; and, not wishing for a continuance of a theme she found so mortifying to her, as that of her own imprudence, forbade Rosa's accompanying her.

The visitors proved to be Mrs. Allworthy and her three heiresses, attended as usual by Lord Derville; and scarcely were they all established in the drawing room, when Lady Wilemore and her three speculating-sources arrived.

"Will you not all go to Hyde Park, to see how Bartholomew Fair looks upon

royal ground?" demanded her ladyship, the moment she was seated. "But where, pray, is that sweet and lovely Lady Meliora? I want to inveigle her to occupy a place in my carriage, which I shall make one of my young heroes mount the box to vacate. Nay, why do you look so alarmed, Ned, as if you could possibly fear going aloft?"

"But he does though," exclaimed Miss Acres; "and who can wonder, when his exaltation will remove him from the transport of gazing at the beauty of beauties. Oh! was I but half the fathoms deep in love with this Paragon—and by the way, you will have both a Paragon and a Standard of Perfection in your family, when Lady Meliora enters it—this Paragon of Beauty, as your ladyship assures us she is, I would play my brother Johnny a slippery trick; and by a few manœuvres of nautical skill, and a few broadsides of nautical courage, take the prize of their mutual speculation, and sail off with it for my reward."

"No, that would be the stealthy

manœuvring of a privateer, not like the honourable attack of His Majesty's navy," said Lord Derville, smiling. "Better give up the Meliora as a forlorn hope; and each brother chase the rich prizes under convoy of the Allworthy; and we shall see which proves the prowess of the navy or the army most rapidly exemplified."

"Do not talk of the navy having the presumption to make an attack upon me," exclaimed Miss Acres.

Lady Meliora now believing herself sufficently restored to the brilliancy of full beauty, appeared, to call forth the most unqualified adulation of Lady Wilemore, and the most carefully unveiled inuendoes of deep impressions made by her matchless charms upon *certain young heroes*, who should be nameless; and upon now repeating her project for having a place in her carriage filled by the most fascinating creature in existence, to the infinite surprise and chagrin of her grandmother, Lady Meliora promptly, and with ap-

parent pleasure, acceded to the proposition.

"I thought," said Lady Derville, seriously, "that you had determined not to go out to-day, lest the little indisposition you complained of might increase to the prevention of your attending the *fête* to-morrow."

"But the day is so inviting, and the offer so tempting, grandmama," replied Lady Meliora, with a coaxing smile; "and I really think air will prove beneficial to me: at all events, you know it will improve my complexion for to-morrow."

"I had wished you to accompany Rosa and me to call upon Lady Flowerdew, to whom I think that attention is due from you, had you not considered yourself too unwell to quit your room to-day."

Lady Meliora smiled resistlessly, patted her grandmother's cheek playfully, and, as usual, was permitted to follow the impulse of her own inclinations; and the Bryanstone Square party, attended by Lord Derville, set out for the park

at the same moment. Scarcely were they all departed, when Mrs. O'Dowd arrived in almost breathless dismay, to know if any of her honey friends would accompany her to Mansfield Street.

"For," she said, "I am thrown by a note just received from Lady Flowerdew into the greatest consternation; since her ladyship is to be of Her Majesty's party; and therefore cannot comply with my request, for taking my Ravenswood beauties and myself under her auspices to-morrow evening; so I must lose no time in going to ask her ladyship, what we will do: for I by no means choose to have Lady Wilemore for our *ciceroni*, to be throwing my paragons into shade, whilst she is exhibiting her own; and to be bringing us, my *honey*, to those spots — no matter whether stylish or otherwise—where she can make most by us."

Mrs. O'Dowd now hearing that Lady Derville and *protégée* were bound to the same port, it was soon decided they should all go together.

They found Lady Flowerdew at home, and, an unusual circumstance, alone; Mrs. O'Dowd therefore lost not one moment unnecessarily, ere she commenced her anxiously panted for consultation and inquiries; to all of which her ladyship attended, and answered with the most gratifying courtesy; although she cast many an arch glance at Rosabella; and Lady Derville's wonder was awakened, at the complacent patience of her sister peeress.

At length, through a resistless impulse of charity to Lady Flowerdew, Lady Derville terminated this visit of interrogation; and as her ladyship expressed anxiety to reach home, in hope of hearing from or seeing Mr. Monson, (who she concluded, as he had imbibed such a mania for beholding sights, would not fail to return for the *fête*,) they, in consequence, proceeded back to Sloane Street.

But no Charles, no account of him awaited the expectations of his anxious grandmother; and further to increase her uneasiness, after waiting dinner a con-

siderable time for Lady Meliora, a note arrived from her, to announce her having been prevailed upon by Lady Wilemore to accompany her home to her family dinner; but to make amends for that desertion, they would all drink tea in Sloane Street.

The O'Dowds forming part of Lady Derville's dinner circle, they now sat down to their long protracted repast; and scarcely had they commenced it, when an express arrived, forwarded from Freecastle's to Captain O'Dowd.

"Well, I am sorry," he exclaimed, the moment he cast his eyes over the letter the express brought him, "and must request Lady Derville's permission to retire a few moments to reply to it. It is an apology, Dora, from Duncombe and Neville, for not coming up to town to-night; but the bride elect, Miss Neville, was taken so dangerously ill, that the ceremony could not take place; and the whole family are in such a state of grief and distraction, that Neville of course

could not come; and Duncombe, although his heart is with us, cannot in common humanity quit his friend, whilst so afflicting a blow is pending over him."

CHAPTER XIII.

SCARCELY had our Sloane Street party re-established themselves in the drawing room, when Lady Wilemore, her Standards, and the recruit she now trusted she had enlisted for the captain of the troop, arrived to tea; and whilst this light beverage was going forward, Captain O'Dowd, after looking a few moments out of a window, said—

"This is one of the most heavenly evenings I ever recollect seeing, in this circle of the globe; and yet, I should not be in the least surprised to see rain fall heavily, ere twenty-four hours make their unvarying round."

"Alermont! is it mad you are, man?" exclaimed Mrs. O'Dowd, looking ludicrously dismayed, "or what is it can bewitch you, to talk such nonsense and stuff? Is it rain, my honey! when every thing is ready for the *fête?*"

"The regulators of this business seem to have observed the same prognostic in the clouds that you have, sir," said Captain Standard, "since every one was surprised at a notice being issued to-day, stating, 'that in case of rain or unfavourable weather, a further postponement of the *fête* must take place.'"

"Well," cried Mrs. O'Dowd, angrily, "of all the cruel, absurd, and atrocious notices that ever was issued, that was the most abominable. Why, it must have been the dire plot of some jacobinical wretch, to throw a damp upon the loyal ardor of the public, and cause a *brouillerie*."

"With whom, my dear?" demanded Captain O'Dowd, smiling archly. "With Æolus, as keeper of air-stores to the Prince Regent, and with—"

"And with you," interrupted Mrs. O'Dowd, now laughing at her own anger, "for your ill-natured, visionary prognostics. As well might they in China issue notice, 'that should a fall of snow take

place, the pastime of the emperor and court must be postponed.'"

But, contrary to that genial state Mrs. O'Dowd had determined the weather ought to remain in for general accommodation, arose the succeeding morning, for dense was the atmosphere, and the heavy clouds showered down their humid burden; while many a female heart arose that morning as heavy as the clouds, and wept large drops in unison.

Lady Meliora was overwhelmed by dismay, when the impetuous Betty burst into her room to awake her; and with dolorous clamor proclaimed, "it was raining cats and dogs;" but Rosabella endeavoured to console her, with that comfort to be derived from yet looking forward to pleasure only suspended. This however would not answer; Lady Meliora declared postponed pleasures either never took place, or else when arrived, wearied with protracted anticipation, nothing answered your expectations.

Our heroine with a smile inquired, how her friend, so new to pleasure,

had found experience of what she affirmed. But Lady Meliora did not require any experience to convince her it must be so; for she knew it was so; and so it remained for Rosa, whose next attempt at consolation was attended with better success:—for venturing at a "may be it may clear up," proved so consonant to the wishes of her ladyship, that instantly she adopted this hypothesis as the prophetic augury of the Delphic Oracle; and in the altered accent of soothing hope, she exclaimed—

"Oh! I am certain it will clear up; for although the rain falls heavier than when Betty opened the shutters, and it is grown considerably thicker and darker, yet I really think these are rather auspicious omens than otherwise:—and more than all, because you are going to the *fête*; and you are always so lucky."

The post of this morning brought an excuse from Mr. Sternham to his patroness, for his protracted absence, through the dangerous state he had found his friend in,

whom, although certainly better, he thought it would be unkind yet to leave; but *impolitic* was the term the speculating gentleman ought to have used, since his friend was rich, and had no heir at law.

But no letter, no intelligence arrived in any form from Mr. Monson, to the dire alarm and affliction of his grandmother, and to the extreme distress of Rosa, whose uneasiness relative to him was painfully augmented by having been allowed no opportunity yet of putting her design of writing to him into execution; and thus a degree of self-upbraiding rested on her mind, for knowing even the little he had confided to her, and devising nothing to aid him in his perplexities.

Ere breakfast was ended, Captain O'Dowd was announced, who on entering, said—

"I am come to implore an asylum from the inclemency of the weather; having been turned out, like a dog, by

my better half, whom I have left in hysterics."

"Hysterics!" repeated all the ladies, in alarm and commiseration.

"Ay, is not that what you call it, when ladies are laughing and crying alternately? for she has been in those diversified paroxysms the whole morning; and the ludicrous *row* she has made with the whole household at Freecastle's has proved a delicious treat to me, who like to see her enthusiasms in action; every waiter in the house scudding about in different directions for her; some in the purchase of various almanacks; others engaged upon consultation with barometers within doors; others out on the same service at every optician's shop in the neighbourhood; others taking the sense of the weather-wise, upon the important question; whilst more were sentenced to an observatory on the house top, to watch for every variation that could portend a favourable change in the politics of the clouds;—for I assure you, they were politically affected upon

the occasion; since it was all through the incantations of some vile Jacobinical rebels, that our evening's expectation of loyal amusement has been demolished; and upon the solemn acquiescence of Mrs. Dolittle, upon the evident treason in operation, my risibility became so uncontrollable, that then my fiat for a turn-out was pronounced. But even in Madam Dora's ire against me, the gipsy was alive to how she could play upon my good-nature; and so she commissioned me to entreat you, Miss Frederick, to have compassion upon her, and come in the carriage, which will arrive in an hour's time, to a consultation upon some of the most important business that ever came before Deliberation and sage Wisdom to decide upon."

The carriage in due time arrived for the conveyance of Rosabella to Mrs. O'Dowd; whom she found overwhelmed with the most amusing species of whimsical distress, at the inauspicious appearance of the weather: but as very shortly this began to clear, she began to brighten,

and to find spirits for commencing that important consultation she had summoned Rosa to, and which was, to advise with her, upon what she should, ought, or might venture to put on, in the different gradations of fineness the day might turn to ;—"for as to her grand dress, made up at Lady Flowerdew's prime dress-maker's, in the highest style of elegance and fashion, expressly for the occasion, that could not be risked in uncertainty;" but dress after dress was laid out for inspection by Mrs. Dolittle—who, on this occasion, seemed very inaptly discriminated by her paternal nomenclature—in different degrees of value, to suit the peril they might be exposed to; and so, as the day brightened, the least in esteem received its mandate for disappearance; until at length, by the time poor Rosa was granted her release, all had been withdrawn from the brightening rays of the sun, save the paragon of taste, elegance, and fashion; but as our heroine was about to depart, she received her fee, for patient attendance on so critical

a consultation, by Mrs. O'Dowd playfully twirling round her a beautiful silk scarf, to keep her from cold in the night air.

Lord Derville most unexpectedly attended the dinner circle of his grandmother this day; for ever since his addresses to Miss Vandelure had received the unequivocal sanction of the young lady herself, he had either dined at Mrs. Allworthy's—to whom a recompense was accessible—or at a neighbouring coffee-house, with his friend Mr. Foxcraft; as even the distance of Sloane Street he found too great from the spot of his devotion.

Lady Derville soon perceived a cloud of care upon her grandson's brow; and such an unusual appearance at once awakened a fearful apprehension of some alarming intelligence of the truant Charles; and the moment the domestics withdrew from attendance, she implored his lordship to impart, without reserve or delay, all he had heard of his brother.

"I have heard nothing whatever of my brother, Ma'am," he replied; "but I have heard from Mr. Van Trompe, who

in a most extraordinary, unexpected, and unjustifiable manner, flatly refuses his consent to my union with his ward; and, what do you think the puppy grounds his unvanquishable objections upon? Why, truly, upon my being an Irish peer; and that Miss Vandelure, from her immense wealth, is entitled to an alliance with one of the first nobles of our land. Louisa has been weeping bitterly over this rejection; and faith, I have been almost ready to pistol myself, since Mr. Van Trompe was out of the reach of my aim at him; although that good-natured poor fellow, Foxcraft, has been striving to comfort us both with a view of our resource at Gretna Green, if the rascal, upon further importunity, proves inexorable: but I must be pretty certain she is not a ward in Chancery, ere I adopt that alternative. And besides, as Foxcraft suggests, I might find a difficulty in ascertaining exactly the extent of Louisa's property, to make adequate settlements, without her guardian's consent and aid; since an immense part of it is vested in Holland; there not being, he

is pretty certain, much above one hundred and sixty thousand pounds in this country: however, if he can find out for me the reality of that sum being in our funds here, I shall run my risk of what further she may possess; and she is generously contented to have her settlement arranged by that comparatively small portion. But however, notwithstanding we have this resource of a Caledonian expedition to comfort us, poor Louisa has got so bad a headache, through weeping and fretting over this most ungracious letter, that Mrs. Allworthy persuaded her to give up seeing the ascent of the balloon, but to go lie on her bed until the time for attending the latter exhibitions of the evening; and this arrangement caused my being able to dine at home."

In sympathetic condolence with his lordship, and reprobation of Mr. Van Trompe, our party passed their time until the carriage was announced, to convey Lord Derville and Lady Meliora, after their purposely early dinner, to accompany the O'Dowds, to behold the ascent of the

adventurous aeronaut from before the Queen's Palace, an exhibition which Rosabella declined attending, since neither affection nor duty would permit her leaving her benefactress for such a number of hours alone, to brood over all her painful alarms relative to Mr. Monson; and no entreaty had been able to prevail upon her ladyship, to venture into the parks for any moment of the revels.

In due time Lord Derville and his sister returned, to get some tea; and the latter to make improvement in her appearance, as she feared her toilet had been injudiciously arranged since she had failed to attract all eyes from the balloon; although with much exultation she proclaimed to her grandmother and Rosa, "That one of the royal dukes had riveted his attention exclusively on her, as long as the perpetual motion of Lord Derville's *fidgetting* propensity allowed her to remain in his royal highness's view."

At length Lord Derville and his lovely charge set out for Albemarle Street, since Freecastle's was the rallying point for

the party to assemble; where on their arrival they found Lady Wilemore and her Standards unfurled for conquest, in high impatience for "the gathering;"—next appeared the legions from Bryanstone Square, reinforced by Mr. Foxcraft, Mrs. Allworthy's hopeful son, and an elderly gentleman, suspected to be a favourite wooer of the stately *chaperon* of Bryanstone Square; and as they were all collected in the hall to sally forth, they encountered Captain Hawk, led by good generalship to that station in the accurate moment; when Lord Derville, knowing not of any interdiction to the measure, inlisted him amid their forces; but as Lady Meliora was provided with an escort in Mr. Edward Standard, he could not then succeed in his management to obtain a place in her suite.

But Captain Hawk lost little advantage by not succeeding in his wished-for station at this moment, since her ladyship was in no very favourable disposition towards any of her party; for having just beheld the constellation of stars assembled at her

Majesty's dinner, she now felt most sensibly the want of consequence in the men collected around her,—her own brother the only man of rank amongst them; and nothing could she find as a palliative for the painful mortification of her pride, in having Lady Meliora Menson, the greatest beauty of the age, escorted by an insignificant half-pay lieutenant, but the opportune recollection of Lady Wilemore being an honourable, and Mr. Standard being her sister's son, so that consequently his grandfather had been a peer. However, still she felt great cause for indignation against her brothers, for not having contrived to form acquaintance suited to their rank; since her younger brother appeared to have formed intimacies with those whose names he had been ashamed to own; whilst the elder had only added to his store a vulgar Irishman, who proclaimed the rabble race he had sprung from, every time he rashly committed himself by articulation. And now she rejoiced exceedingly, that the fiat of the initiated Lady [redacted]verdew was against their exhibiting

their poverty of connexion in the Royal Gallery, to proclaim to the Irish *noblesse*, who had seen her presented at the court of Dublin, how unsuitable was the sphere she was degraded to move in.

The aid of carriages had been deemed superfluous, since the short distance they should be permitted to go in them rendered them almost useless for conveyance; and as there were nine ladies and only eight gentlemen of the party, Captain O'Dowd kindly undertook the care of our heroine,—who, portionless as she was, attracted none of the speculators around her,—with his wife: for which attention Rosa was most grateful; since although she was suffering no pang of wounded pride, she felt many through coward apprehension; as the immensity of the multitude they had to encounter greatly appalled her, who had been reared in almost total solitude, as something awfully terrific. But soon experiencing the multitude in good humour is not like a formidable torrent of raging waters, her

apprehensions shortly were calmed; and, with the O'Dowds, she began to seek amusement through an indefatigable use of her optic powers.

CHAPTER XIV.

As we cannot suppose our readers in ignorance of any thing relative to the fête, held in the parks of the British metropolis, on the First of August 1814, in commemoration of manifold events, we shall not weary them with any attempt at a description of a scene, we merely take them to as one necessary to our present narrative, since there one of the principal incidents of our history occurred.

Rosabella paced the gay scene in every different promenade, or became the stationary observer, according as the fancy of her party willed it; but at length, Mrs. O'Dowd—who was no candidate for pedestrian fame—finding that bodily fatigue could be experienced even in fairy land, was suddenly seized with conviction, that it would be a necessary compliment to seek out the children of Lady Flowerdew,

and sit a quarter of an hour with them. Accordingly her husband and Rosa accompanied her to the Royal Gallery, where they promptly found them, and Mrs. O'Dowd the accommodation which she sought.

Lord Belford and Lady Frances had been wild to walk into St. James's Park, to obtain a closer view of the attractive Chinese bridge and the pagoda; but Miss Lorrain had feared to indulge their wish. Yet now, as Captain O'Dowd assured her no danger whatever could result from a compliance with their desire, and offered himself to take charge of them, if she would take charge of his better half during his absence; she assented to their venturing. Mary Lorrain also wishing to form one of this pedestrian party, Rosa offered to accompany her, and they immediately sallied forth; the two children in the convoy of Captain O'Dowd, the two young ladies under the protection of Lord Flowerdew's private secretary, Mr. Conway.

About half an hour before Mrs. O'Dowd

voted for an adjournment to the Royal Gallery, her trio had been separated, by some temporary pressure amid the throng, from the remainder of their party; and had not afterwards been able to effect a junction; therefore as our heroine now proceeded towards the canal, she naturally glanced her eyes in every direction, in search for her beloved Meliora,—not certainly in alarm at their separation, but in anxiety for their reunion. But instead of these eager glances encountering her whom they sought, or any of the fugitive party, she suddenly beheld those, whom of all the world she expected least to see there—Mr. Trench and Egremont—not the Egremont overpowered by horror and distress she had last beheld him, but in all the brilliant bloom and animation of health and happiness; on whose arm familiarly hung a young female of uncommon loveliness, elegantly attired, and to whom his attention was wholly devoted at the moment, listening to what she was uttering with the most intense interest,

and a countenance beaming with affectionate admiration.

To the prompt apprehension of the dismayed Rosabella this lady stood confessed as the mysterious cause of their sudden heart-rending separation; and with this belief a pang, stunning to every faculty, shot through her anguished bosom; and whilst endeavouring at articulation, to inform her companion she was not well, she fell, bereft of sense and power, against Mr. Conway, who, unprepared for such an event, saved her not from sinking to the ground, although he did effect the prevention of her fall from being a serious one.

The wild shriek of Mary Lorrain, as in the first moment of dismayed apprehension she cried out, "She is dead," naturally attracted the humane as well as the curious. Amongst the former Egremont's party were induced to pause; and as they were hearing it re-echoed through the multitude, "that a young lady had suddenly expired," Egremont obtained a view

of the inanimate form of Rosabella, now raising up by Mr. Conway to convey into one of the adjacent tents; when instantly giving his companion to the care of Mr. Trench, he almost frantically rushed amid the throng surrounding her, snatched her to his own arms, and bore her to a tent, followed by the terrified Mary and the amazed Mr. Conway, who believed nothing less than some aeronaut knight had flown off with his lovely burden.

In this tent Egremont procured every requisite for the restoration of our heroine's suspended faculties, and every prompt assistance from the persons assembled around them. At length these anxious exertions for her recovery were attended with success, and Rosa unclosed her eyes to behold those of Egremont riveted upon her face, with an intensity of ardent solicitude, that instantly reclosed her senses in suspension; when Mary Lorrain, in full conviction that this relapse was mortal, fell into the most distressing hysterics, which at once called off every

attention of Mr Conway to her, for whom he felt a more than common interest.

Very shortly Rosabella again revived, and with this re-animation came more firmness, for she now beheld the agonized gaze of Egremont without the subjugation of her faculties.

In those well remembered tones, so familiar to her ears at Myrtle's Town, Egremont now inquired how she found herself; and although the thrilling tenderness, with which they vibrated through her heart, seemed laden with hope and comfort's balms, the still painfully recollected look he had beamed on his lovely companion gave to her reply accents so chillingly reserved, that the electrified Egremont changed his position in an agony of dismay, to one in which he could speak to her without being overheard.

"Rosa, in mercy, tell me," he lowly articulated, "what has arisen to change thus cruelly your manner to me?—What has been the dreadful cause of your torturing silence, when Mr. Trench conveyed

to you,—the to me joyful conviction of every impeding barrier to our union being happily removed,—or rather, that none, most providentially, had ever existed."

In this otherwise most happy intelligence was lost the expected clew to the discovery of her mother; and Rosa, in this moment of oppressive feeling, became so pale, and her agitation appeared so alarming, that Egremont in dismay flew for a glass of water, a few sips of which enabled her to articulate, "that no letter from Mr. Trench had reached her hand;" but now, repentant of her unfounded jealousy, she felt ashamed to revert to the cause of her altered manner.

"No letter reached you!" he softly whispered; "Mr. Sternham then intercepted it; and, in his inexplicable anxiety to divide us, left you to the belief, I thought not of your feelings in my absence; and your natural conviction of my delinquency has led you to this torturing reception of me.—But this is not a place my now—I trust—own Rosa, to enter upon many explanations that I pant to—not that

I could yet become,—in short, there is yet one circumstance I wish not to reveal to you, until I have fulfilled an appointment at some distance in the country, which I am called to attend to-morrow; and after which the power will be mine of becoming perfectly explicit upon every point connected with our late agonizing separation: and this essential measure I wished to accomplish before I sought my Rosa, who from Gore I heard was in London; and now I have found you, Oh, how torturing becomes this engagement, that must tear me from you until Thursday! But, tell me, where then shall I find you?"

"At Lady Derville's, in Sloane Street."

"Oh! how cruel is thus meeting first in public! But, who—who forms your party here to-night? Any of the Ravenswood family?"

"Lord Derville and Lady Meliora," she replied.

"My Rosa, my adored Rosa!" he said hastily, and with a change in manner indicative of some unpleasant embarrassment, "circumstances—which shall all be satis-

factorily explained to you on Thursday, compel the necessity,—at least awaken my wish, to avoid the recognition of any of the Ravenswood family, until I return from my excursion; when you, I trust, will present me to them as the most enviable of mankind:—but now,—now, alas! I must leave you, lest I should encounter them. Yet, do you think I may venture to quit you?—to inflict upon myself, Rosa, the agony of leaving you?—for it is agony to me; and, after such a dreadful, dreadful parting, to meet in public, and be compelled so soon again to separate."

"I am well,—quite perfectly well," responded Rosa, struggling with all her powers to summon sufficient self-possession to yield her the preservation of a dignified composure, since this inexplicable incoherence in Egremont's manner, and too evident anxiety to escape from her, filled her bosom with a painful degree of perplexity, difficult to sustain; since suspicion was again awakened, torturing to her tenderly attached heart, and which faith in

his honour, strenuously combated to overthrow.

The alarm of Mary Lorrain having been removed by the recovery of Rosabella, her terrible agitation soon subsided; and she approached the trembling Rosa, to know how she found herself. And now, every possibility of any further particular conversation being thus terminated, Egremont became visibly impatient to depart, "to send," he said, "an old and attached friend of Miss Frederick's, to find the joyful surprise of meeting her."

"I conclude it is Mr. Trench you allude to," said the agitated Rosabella, with the utmost difficulty suppressing a rising flow of tears, at this ill-boding impatience to fly from her, in the moment of meeting after such a direful parting:—"and should he kindly take the trouble of seeking me, let him direct his pursuit to the Royal Gallery, whither I think, Miss Lorrain, we had better immediately proceed, to lull any apprehension that may be awakened by our long protracted absence."

"But are you sure, quite sure, you are equal to the task of walking thither, after such an indisposition?" demanded Egremont, in a tone, and with a look of tender solicitude, calculated to banish every painful doubt.

"Perfectly," Rosa said; and he pronounced his adieu in tones and language suited to meet the ear of observant auditors, but accompanied by a glance and pressure, of the hand that spoke the tenderness of his feelings towards her. As he rapidly darted from the tent, Rosa, gazing after the retreating form, that seemed but the momentary phantom of a pleasing vision, saw him suddenly start; and in seeking the cause of this involuntary motion, she found it sympathetic, since amongst the stationary spectators at the tent door she beheld the now ever to her appalling form of Mr. Sternham, who in the moment of her recognition of him disappeared.

The feelings of Rosabella were in so amazed a state, that to concentrate her thoughts to any one point seemed an utter

impossibility; and still she almost doubted the reality of having beheld and conversed with Egremont, and heard from him that all impeding barriers to their union were removed; nor still could scarcely believe it any thing but delusion, and that in the varying fancy of a dream, a transit from happiness to misery had been effected by the spectral form of Mr. Sternham.

Mary Lorrain, when retracing the footsteps of Captain O'Dowd and his young charge towards the Pagoda, had beheld amid the multitude Mr. Monson, with a most beautiful young woman leaning on his arm; and, as about the same moment our heroine had fainted, she naturally concluded she had beheld him also; and, under the firm belief cherished by her sister and herself, of Rosabella's attachment to Mr. Monson, drew her conclusion of the cause of this sudden suspension of faculty. Hence her beholding visible traces of emotion and abstraction of manner awakened no astonishment, whilst it silenced inquiries that might have been distressing; and only with a pitying, not a scrutinizing

eye, Mary regarded her companion, as she inquired, was she indeed yet equal to returning to the gallery? . . .

Rosabella's swoon having been the effect of emotion, not indisposition, her subsequent recovery was therefore more rapid and complete; and her anxiety to reach a spot where she might hope to converse with Mr. Trench, and have her painful doubts removed, lent her ability to attempt her return, even sooner than otherwise she might have possibly done. But a discharge of artillery having announced the grand display of fireworks in the Green Park about to commence, the difficulty was considerably increased of the progress of Mr. Conway and his timid companions, by the rushing of the multitude towards the scene of action; so that much of the pyrotechinical performance had been exhibited before their arrival at the gallery, where Rosa found Mr. Trench anxiously awaiting her.

For some moments, little more than their meeting cordial greetings found opportunity to pass between our heroine and

her revered friend, in consequence of the numerous inquiries of how they lost Captain O'Dowd, &c. &c. When at length Mr. Trench could venture to pour any thing into her attentive ear, she had every doubt removed of the constancy of her lover, and the necessity of his quitting town the subsequent day, and his painful infliction of tearing himself from her, to avoid the recognition of his Irish neighbours, confirmed: but the causes of these two painfully necessary measures Mr. Trench left unexplained; while he assured her, that all would be satisfactorily accounted for, after their important visit to the country; when he, as Egremont's ambassador, was to lay his suit in proper form before Lady Derville, in defiance of the impeding machinations of Mr. Sternham.

The blushing, agitated Rosabella, now importuned Mr. Trench to absolve her from that promise of secrecy to Lady Derville, upon the subject of Egremont's attachment, which long had tortured her with the upbraidings of her heart, for

disingenuous reserve to her beloved benefactress; and Mr. Trench made her happy, by the removal of the interdict to her wished confidence, provided she found no cause on the morrow for further apprehension from the arts and malice of Mr. Sternham, who had unfortunately seen Egremont with her.

Lady Meliora had, during the long absence of our heroine from Mrs. O'Dowd, ventured into the Royal Gallery, to inquire for her friend; and becoming weary of standing so long to view the fireworks, condescended to return to obtain a seat; and to the surprise of Rosabella, appeared under the sole protection of Captain Hawk; who seemed equally dispirited as his beautiful companion; who, the more she beheld of the constellation of rank assembled at the Queen's House, the more discontented she became at her own mortifying insignificance; and the more determined to appear no more to public view, until she had contrived to find her station in her natural sphere; from whence, by the mismanagement of her relatives, she found herself excluded.

As it had ever been the custom of Lady Meliora, to impart all her little chagrins to the ear of her sympathizing friend, she now made her way to Rosa, to tell her all the discontents that disturbed the serenity of her bosom, to the entire destruction of her conference with her reverend friend, whom Lady Meliora never before had seen, since indisposition had prevented his attending the jubilee: and amongst her ladyship's causes for murmur was, having been compelled even gladly to accept the protecting arm of Captain Hawk, when deserted by every one beside; since even Mr. Edward Standard had—after all his aunt's declarations of his unbounded admiration of her—suddenly absconded from her to a conference with Miss Jones, Miss Acres, and Mrs. Allworthy's son, and had never after made an attempt to rejoin her to apologize for his abrupt dereliction.

The moment Lady Meliora had made her lamentations to Rosabella, her wish for continuing in the gallery terminated; and every disadvantage of remaining there,

to be *particularized* and *vulgarized*, as not being of her Majesty's party, recurred to her tortured imagination. At length, in defiance of every feeling of fatigue, she would sally down to the lawn, and insisted upon Rosa's being her companion; but soon our heroine found she was only to be nominally so, as the moment they reached the lawn, her ladyship pushed forward with Captain Hawk, leaving Rosa to a *tête à tête* conference with Mr. Trench. Scarcely had they benefited by this manœuvre of the wily captain's, when the cry of fire from the melancholy accident of the pagoda occasioned so great a tumult, through the multitude rushing to the terrific scene of conflagration, that a complete separation was effected, by an immense throng rapidly and impetuously intervening between Rosa and her imprudent friend; and ere our heroine had time to observe the magnitude of this intervention, Egremont in tremulous agitation caught her hand, in the moment he obtained a post by her side.

"My Rosa,—my now, I firmly trust—own Rosa!" he softly whispered—"this moment of unobserved conference, is more happiness than I had dared to hope for, although watching for it with all the eager anxiety its importance to my peace could awaken:—for when compelled by the arbitrary cruelty of existing circumstances, to tear myself from my beloved, even in the moment of her indisposition, I took my station amid the crowd, where, from ambush I could behold you; I saw, therefore, your descent from the gallery with your fair friend to mingle with the pedestrians, and have been the retracer of your steps hither; and now, my Rosa, in this short moment of anxious conference afforded us, tell me,—oh! tell me, you are unchanged."

But a very few more sentences of the most tender import had flowed from the lips of Egremont, warm from his devotedly attached heart; and timidly replied to by the blushing, agitated Rosabella, when Mr. Trench suddenly exclaimed—

"My friend, I grieve to wrest you from your present happiness; but Lord Derville approaches."

Egremont had only time to murmur out, "How cruel!" and to press the hand of his heart's consecrated idol, in the moment of his precipitate retreat; and Rosa, as she sighed at his departure, to wonder why it should be necessary; when Lord Derville and Miss Vandelure stood before her, his lordship exclaiming—

"For Heaven's sake, can you give us any intelligence of Miss Jones and Miss Acres, as Mrs. Allworthy is in an agony relative to them, since she fears their having been persuaded by Mr. Standard and her son, with whom she last saw them, to go into the pagoda; and if so, the consequence may indeed be fatal."

"Of that apprehension I certainly can relieve Mrs. Allworthy," said Rosa, "for not many minutes before the cry of fire reached my ears, I saw that identical party hastening through the crowd towards Piccadilly."

Lord Derville and Miss Vandelure now exchanged glances replete with meaning.

"It is not possible," exclaimed Miss Vandelure, "that you really think Mr. Foxcraft's suspicion well founded."

"It is really possible," replied his lordship; "Foxcraft is a shrewd observer; and in one moment he pronounced the panic of Lady Wilemore and Dame Allworthy, for the possible catastrophe attendant upon this fire to their respective relatives, inimitable acting; but come, Louisa, let us hie to tell the frantic parents, the fate of their hopefuls need not be sought for through the priestess of pyromancy; nor through any priest, but that of Gretna Green celebrity."

Having now, to all appearance, lost every trace of Lady Meliora in the throng that had turned its torrent toward the blazing pagoda, Rosa had begun with her reverend companion to retrace her footsteps to the Royal Gallery, as the place of rendezvous most likely for her truant friend to find her, when Lady Meliora suddenly

emerging from a stationary mass of spectators, and still accompanied by the wily Captain Hawk, flew to Rosa in evident agitation, and with a tremulous grasp seized her arm as she falteringly articulated—

"Rosa, we must instantly go home."

Our terrified heroine, gazing on the countenance of her friend to learn the cause of such unusual perturbation, found her terrors augmented by the expression there portrayed; and now, to her tenderly anxious inquiries if illness had assailed her, could only obtain the response of—"no, no," from her ladyship; whilst Captain Hawk proclaimed his belief, that alarm from the cry of fire, and the impetuous press of the multitude rushing to the scene of conflagration, had proved too much for her.

"Yes, yes," faltered Lady Meliora, "the scene has altogether proved too much for me, and I am anxious to fly from it; so I think,—I believe I had better proceed to the Gallery as fast as I am able, and there endeavour to rally my spirits;

whilst there are some arrangements kindly made for conveying me to Sloane Street."

Accordingly her ladyship, pale, trembling, and with difficulty combating a flow of tears, turned her faltering steps towards the Royal Gallery, tenderly supported by the alarmed Rosabella, anxiously by Captain Hawk, and kindly accompanied by Mr. Trench; who, when they reached the gay structure they sought, and Rosa had answered his inquiry of whether he could be useful by a negative, bade her an affectionate adieu; as he said Egremont's *sister* was compelled to go home early to her young nursling; and that he and Egremont having arranged to set out on their expedition at dawn of day, they too were anxious to get home; and more particularly, as there stood an interdicting barrier to Egremont's taking his station near her.

Mr. Trench now departed, and the agitated Rosa hastened after her still more agitated friend, who placed herself in the most obscure spot in the Gallery, and leaning her head against the wall of it, drew

her veil over her face, to shade that as much as possible from annoying observation, whilst she dispatched Captain Hawk to tell the O'Dowds — who were seated at some distance from her — "she wanted to go home."

The agitation of Lady Meliora now seemed, as she became stationary, to augment rather than diminish; and Rosabella with delight beheld the rapid approach of Captain and Mrs. O'Dowd, as the harbinger of a speedy return to Sloane Street.

CHAPTER XV.

"Ah, my honey!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Dowd, the moment she drew near, "what could in possibility induce your allowing yourself to be overcome by terror in such an inopportune moment,—just whilst they are in the very act of astonishing us with their beautiful fireworks? Alermont will get you some hartshorn, to restore your flimsy courage; and then, after the transformation of the temple, you shall go home—if you still wish it;—but, before that transmutation, no one in their senses would think of going. Besides, it would be an ill omen to fly from Peace and Concord, just opening to your view."

The stifled sigh of her friend again gave terror to the susceptible bosom of Rosabella, whilst it made Mrs. O'Dowd more earnestly gaze upon Lady Meliora, when instantly she exclaimed—

"Fly Alermont, and obtain some restorative for this poor thing; whose alarm has been no jest, I now plainly perceive. But what caused you so much terror? Were you in the pagoda, when the fire was discovered?"

"No!" responded her ladyship, tremulously,—"But ask me no questions, dear Mrs. O'Dowd, for indeed I am unable to answer you; only for pity's sake get me a glass of water, and contrive for my going home."

A pause now ensued, unbroken by any of the party, until the return of Captain O'Dowd, with an attendant bearing wine, &c., when Lady Meliora eagerly drank some water, and then implored, that if possible she might go home.

"Take some wine by itself;" said Captain O'Dowd, "for you are fatigued as well as terrified, and when that has effected your revival, you may be able to attempt a pedestrian removal to Albemarle Street, from whence I can readily convey you home; but you know there is no carriage belonging to our party in waiting here,

they were not ordered to assemble at Freecastle's until two o'clock; and if I go in pursuit of a carriage now, it is a million to one if I succeed in getting it up nearer than our hotel, but I will with pleasure attempt any thing you wish."

Lady Meliora Monson had been taught, from infancy, to believe herself the first object for consideration in creation; she had therefore long lost all remembrance of others having wishes or feelings to be gratified or wounded as well as herself; and upon this usual system she now acted, wholly unmindful of the intimation given her by Mrs. O'Dowd, of the moment being an inopportune one in which her wish for departure had arisen; and therefore consulting her own feelings, which would prove more consonant to them, sending Captain O'Dowd to hunt out a carriage, or to accompany him at once to Albemarle Street; when this deliberation was suddenly interrupted by the arrival of Lady Wilemore, come into the Gallery to perform a grand crisis of emotion. "For it was reported," she said, "her nephew

Edward was set out to the land of uncontrolled marriage, with Miss Acres; which was a report so wounding to her feelings, in the alarm naturally awakened for the consequences of such a rash step, upon so short an acquaintance, that she could not choose but weep in maternal alarm for the dear amiable fellow's menaced happiness; and, indeed, was it not for the well-founded hope of the report being groundless, merely reared at the suggestion of Mr. Foxcraft, who loved, she believed, to banter, she could not choose but swoon."

The moment Lady Meliora comprehended the cause of Lady Wilemore's scene of pathetic display, her pride in alarm, commanded her to every exertion to permit her assumption of a superficial tranquillity, to enable her to remain where she was; to prevent the not unlikely measure of ascribing her agitation to chagrin at the dereliction of Mr. Standard, whom she now suspected his aunt had so industriously proclaimed as her lover, to veil his real designs upon one of the rich prizes in Mrs. Allworthy's fortune office.

But there she wronged her ladyship, who was innocent even of a suspicion of the rich mine her nephew had, whilst in Berkshire, contrived to spring, until that very morning, when he gave her the unexpected intelligence of Miss Acres having consented to elope for Scotland with him.

No sooner had this suggestion, and its consequent resolution, entered the mind of Lady Meliora, than she proclaimed herself so much better through Captain O'Dowd's *cordial* kindness, that she doubted not being able to await the metamorphosis of the Temple; and then, with an exertion at composure even to herself surprising, since she had never been accustomed to the necessity of any species of exertion, she turned to Lady Wilemore, and with a smile of irony said—

"I conjure you, Lady Wilemore, to take comfort, for be assured Miss Acres was a much better speculation than Lady Meliora Monson, and your nephew has managed much better for himself than your kind maternal anxiety would have done for him. But pray, may I ask, is there another prize

in view, richer than myself, that I am to be condoled with also upon Captain Standard's sudden dereliction? For we must not suppose him less perfect than the other individuals of his family, and suspect that caprice or inconstancy operated in withdrawing his attentions from me this evening."

A few hours since, and Lady Meliora could have proceeded with spirit in avenging herself by sarcastic weapons upon this manœuvrer, for daring to select her for the veil of her covert plans; but now she had that within her which extinguished her animation's fire, and in the deeply-felt suspension of her long season of tranquillity, she found she could attempt no more. But even the little she had uttered effected the purpose of wholly disconcerting Lady Wilemore, not even leaving her the power of framing a plausible excuse for Captain Standard, whose conduct she could not proclaim inspired by sullen anger and envy at his younger brother's superior address and good fortune, in so

rapidly entrapping the bold and wealthy Miss Acres.

At length the transformation, so anxiously expected, of the Temple took place, and Lady Meliora believing she had now sacrificed long enough to securing herself from the humiliating suspicion of Mr. Standard's elopement having influenced her feelings and indisposition, requested Captain O'Dowd to accompany her and Rosabella to Albemarle Street, where she doubted not her grandmother's carriage was by that time in waiting; and Captain O'Dowd instantly assenting, they set out to the hotel, with the attentive Captain Hawk for an additional escort. They had, however, some time to remain ere the arrival of Lady Derville's carriage; and during this interval, Rosabella, although much she had to monopolize her every thought, yet in affectionate solicitude attentive to her friend, soon developed that her recent, but too apparent agitated distress was merely suppressed through exertion, and not wholly subdued; and

from this painful observation she was led to fear it was not the effect of alarm, but something of more serious import.

In a night when almost the entire population of the metropolis and its vicinity was concentrated around the spot these young friends had to pass through, neither Capt. O'Dowd nor Capt. Hawk deemed it prudent to confide them solely to the protection of Lady Derville's servants; they therefore kindly and considerately escorted them home, and never to the unsophisticated Rosa's observation had Captain Hawk appeared to act with so much propriety, as since Lady Meliora had announced herself subdued by terror and fatigue; since, although his manner proclaimed a deeply-felt interest for her, it was devoid of all that presuming familiarity that marked it, before the intimation given to him the preceding day by Lady Derville.

As our two young friends returned home ere they were expected, Betty Roach (who was also on the same party of general amusement) had not arrived from the park; intelligence most acceptable to Lady

Meliora, as she had anticipated infinite annoyance from her observations and familiar interrogations. Upon inquiring for her grandmother, to her further relief, she learned, "that she had retired to her chamber, after a long conference with Mr. Sternham, who was returned, and also gone to his room for the night; and that Lady Derville had left orders, no one was to enter her apartment to disturb her, unless any accident should have occurred to her grandchildren; but, that she requested to see Miss Frederick, in her ladyship's dressing-room, as early as it should prove convenient to her in the morning."

The heart of Rosabella now began to throb with painful alarm and anticipation of mischief, through the machinations of Mr. Sternham. Yet she hoped she should experience no great difficulty in counteracting his ingenious devices for conjuring up poor Egremont into something of horrible mould, since she had so incontrovertible a witness as Mr. Trench to bring forward in testimony of his integrity; but still she trembled, since Rosa

doubted not the fertile invention of this portentous enemy, now jealousy was added to the poignancy of his wit, would weave a tissue of misery for her to be enveloped in, until the appearance of Mr. Trench on Thursday.

The moment our two agitated friends entered their chamber, Lady Meliora dismissed the housemaid who attended, and gave orders that Betty should not come into their room upon her return, lest she should disturb them; and her ladyship having thus secured herself from interruption and observers, clasping her arms around Rosabella's neck, burst into the most piteous flow of tears our heroine had ever seen her shed.

"My Meliora, my beloved friend!" exclaimed the alarmed and sympathizing Rosa, "what in the form of misfortune has assailed you? Alas! alas! what evil has befallen poor Charles?"

"Charles!" sobbed Lady Meliora, "I know nothing of Charles, but ask me—ask me not, I implore you, my ever kind Rosa,

why I shed these tears, for I cannot—no, I cannot answer you."

"Oh, merciful Heaven! what can this mean?" said Rosa, now trembling in the paralyzed trepidation of terror, and its icy chill pervading every agitated limb, "have you then, infatuated Meliora, have you been ensnared into any promise of your hand to Captain Hawk?"

"No, no, poor Hawk! no, he has no share in my present distress;" returned her ladyship in a tone of scorn, as withdrawing her arms from Rosa's neck, she proudly walked to a chair, into which she sunk, and continuing her tears with increasing bitterness, added, to the accompaniment of convulsive sobs—

"I should have imagined you knew me better, than to conceive I would degrade myself by such a plebeian alliance as that: but I request,—I desire,—nay, I conjure you, by all our long, long years of friendship, that you desist even from questioning me, desist even from conjecturing the cause of my present distress; as it would

only irritate my feelings, unused to misery. Pass, therefore, this night in total silence, Rosa; let me weep unquestioned and uncontrolled, and to-morrow, to-morrow, I may perhaps find the power, without my heart bursting in the conflict, to tell you all."

"My Meliora, my earliest friend and youthful benefactress!" said Rosa, who now dissolved in tears, and anxiously approaching her, tenderly took her hand—"I would ask no question; I would form no conjecture but such as would yield me the power of weeping over your afflictions with you, or pouring the balm of consolation into your sorrowing bosom, from every assuasive I could find. But, since such is your wish, I will pass my night in silent grief, for distress that friendship must not penetrate; and weep my genuine sympathy for woes that are unconfided to me."

"No, no," said Lady Meliora, affectionately returning the pressure of her hand, "you must go to your bed. Sleep, if you have power, and let your last prayer of this night be an aspiration for fortitude to

be granted from Heaven to me. Rosa, oblige a sorrowing friend; go, go to bed, I shall do so too. I shall rest my aching head upon my pillow, but to the aching heart there is no spot for rest."

"O, yes!" responded Rosa, "a sure, a certain, an unfailing spot; though firm as adamantine rock, yet soft as the balmy bosom of maternal tenderness, let *your* last prayer be for its magic influence. Lay your heart, however teeming with its new-found sorrows, upon its pure shrine, and there you will promptly find it lighten as it rests."

"Ah! Rosa, can faith in heavenly influence do this?"

"Try it," said Rosa, with firm and pious gratitude, "I have never found it fail me."

Lady Meliora tried the experiment, for the first time, for she was new to the disappointments of life, and our heroine hoped with success, since she arose from her knees apparently more composed; but in the course of Rosabella's wakeful night, the deep-drawn sighs, and stifled sobs of

her friend, painfully assured her that hers too was sleepless.

The request of Lady Meliora to ask no questions, although painful to the heart of friendship, Rosa could acquiesce in, but not to conjecture was an impossibility, at least so our heroine found it; for the suggestion promptly arose, and gathered strength as she meditated upon its probability, that either the death or marriage of Lord Montalbert, incautiously communicated to her, was the cause of her beloved friend's affliction. This belief only awakened a powerful increase to her sympathy, in the retrospection of her own heart's anguish, when she believed her unexpected separation from Egremont was to be eternal; and all this sad sympathy, and all her anticipated vexations, through Mr. Sternham's machinations, with the often obtruding thought of the distresses of the ruined Charles, with the trembling apprehension of Egremont having found no clew to the discovery of her connexions, allowed not her contemplations to dwell

exclusively upon the unexpected brightening of her own love's horoscope.

But so interesting were all these themes to the susceptible Rosabella, that, in defiance of the extreme fatigue that had overpowered her when she sought her pillow, she obtained no rest, and was therefore in readiness to start from her bed the moment Lady Derville rang for Dermot in the morning; and the moment she was dressed, and had performed her never omitted sacred duties, she was hastening to obey the commands of her benefactress, when Lady Meliora called her.

"Rosa, my beloved Rosa, my faithful friend,—you who never, never, deceived me," she said "use your influence with grandmama, to take me out of London without delay. Tell her that the air does not agree with me; tell her any thing, to get me out of this detested spot, but that I am unhappy; for upon that subject I cannot, cannot yet enter. Perhaps in the country I may become more rational, and learn submission to the decrees of Fate.

But manage, my own kind Rosa, in grandmama's acquiescence that she questions me not about it."

Rosa, promising to exert her influence, descended from her chamber with a palpitating heart, in firm conviction she was about to encounter an unpleasant scene with her revered benefactress, through the misrepresentations of the designing Mr. Sternham; yet even thus anticipating a painful interview, she was wholly unprepared for the stunning blow to happiness that did await her.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE moment Rosa approached the dressing-room of Lady Derville, she met Dermot emerging from it, who with a sorrowful air motioned for her to acccompany her into an adjoining room.

"Ah! Miss Rosa," she mournfully said, "I greatly fear you are going to hear some direful intelligence, brought to my Lady last night by Mr. Sternham, since, after her long conference with him, I saw she was dreadfully agitated, and, as I thought, by anger mingled with great grief; but to me she was silent upon the subject, only ordering me to give her laudanum. But alas! Miss, opium seems to have done her no good, for I am certain she passed all her night in tears, and she is so tremulous and low, and so ghastly pale, I fear, whatever the misfortune is, it will kill my dear Lady; and I cannot but

fear it is about Master Charles.—Heaven send he has not been duelling."

The terrified and sympathizing Rosabella, now finding she might enter, with a bounding heart and trembling frame presented herself before her benefactress, from whose venerable countenance her eager eye sought information of the nature of the affliction that oppressed her; but through the anxious eye of Rosa was instantly shot to her bosom a pang almost stunning to every faculty, for on the aspect of her beloved protectress she thought she beheld the appearance of hastily approaching dissolution.

"Oh! madam, you are ill!" exclaimed the terrified Rosa, flying to her, and, with the affection of a fondly attached child, anxiously taking her hand.

Immediately the grief-blanched countenance of Lady Derville changed to the crimson hue of infuriated passion; her eyes flashed flames of ire, and, in the suffocating voice of indignant agitation, she exclaimed, as with violence she threw

the hand of the dismayed Rosa from her—

"Touch me not, vile, deceitful, insidious monster of enormous ingratitude! viper, that I fostered in my bosom to sting me to the heart!"

"Oh! madam, my own benefactress!" exclaimed our heroine, bursting into an agony of anguished tears, in firm belief the laudanum had operated upon her intellect.

"And dares your guilty heart acknowledge me your benefactress, whilst it teems with such a full tide of black and dire ingratitude? But dry,—dry those crocodile, those hypocritical tears: they will avail you nothing; for now I know your perfidy,—they may only sully the lustre of that superlative beauty, you used as your treacherous weapon to wound your benefactress."

"For pity's sake, my dear, dear madam, explain; announce to me what all these direful accusations can in possibility have foundation from," exclaimed the amazed

Rosa, now feeling relieved from the agonizing belief of her benefactress having her life or senses menaced; since from her ladyship's last allusion, a suspicion was awakened of all this unusual and alarming violence being the effect of anger, on learning through Mr. Sternham's means of the unfortunate passion Mr. Monson had imbibed for her.

"So you require explanations, madam! Your conscience then conveys not the necessary information!" responded Lady Derville, whose almost frantic violence was beginning to exhaust itself, and to moderate into a more effective dignity of composed resentment.

"Indeed, madam," said Rosabella, faltering only from wounded feeling, upon being suspected of heinous misdemeanors by an individual she so tenderly loved and reverenced — "indeed, madam, my conscience can yield me no aid in the form of an accuser; but whatever I stand arraigned for, of treachery and ingratitude, through the impeaching testimony of Mr. Sternham, my conscience can firmly assist me;

as it holds within it the inspirating record of self-acquittal."

"Rosabella Frederick! this amazing courage, this affectation of innocence—I grieve to pronounce it such—cannot serve you; since all your arts, your duplicity, your long train of deceptive policy, are now before me. Oh! Rosa—Rosa! deceitful semblance of every Heaven-formed virtue! when I took you to my fostering bosom as my child,—when Meliora Monson took you to her infant heart as a sister, and held you firmly there through life as her friend,—little, little did she or I predict you were fondled and cherished only to stab our peace, through arts and perfidy the most profound."

"Oh!" exclaimed Rosa, sinking in an agony of wounded feeling at the feet of Lady Derville, "let that Heaven-inspired pity that led you to take me in infant insulation to your fostering bosom, now extend its influence in my behalf, in this torturing moment, and inspire you with charity to ease the anguish I endure, by revealing to me the nature

of my perfidy, the form of my ingratitude; since by the breath of truth I can dissolve each direful phantom."

"Lord Montalbert!—Rosabella!" said Lady Derville, with an inspiring solemnity."

"Lord Montalbert!!" repeated Rosa, in amazement. "Is Lord Montalbert my accuser, madam?"

"Lord Montalbert stands as the incontrovertible testimony of your dreadful tissue of base hypocritical treachery and ingratitude."

"I can by no means comprehend the texture of this tissue, the fertile genius of Mr. Sternham has woven for the representation of my exploits in turpitude," said Rosa proudly, as she arose from her suppliant posture.

"You could comprehend, I believe, Miss Frederick,—for my child was too guileless to conceal her artless feelings upon the subject, as perhaps she ought—that Lady Meliora Monson--her to whom you owe no trivial debt of obligation;—had fixed her affections, irrevocably fixed them,

upon Lord Montalber; and that her union with him was the first wish of my heart."

"Assuredly I did comprehend all that, madam;—and in my heart too was that wish cherished as a favourite one."

"So you proclaimed; and upon every occasion appeared anxious to add fuel to the flame kindled in the guileless bosom of my ingenuous child; and all this was, as it now appears, to add to the lustre of your own triumph. But let your conscience speak; let that inform you if that can be deemed a triumph, which springs from perfidy, hypocrisy, and ingratitude."

"Madam," exclaimed the impatient Rosa, her heart swelling with indignation at such a dreadful impeachment of her rectitude, "I have supplicated, implored for an explanation of this tremendous suspicion of my rectitude; but as my supplication has proved inefficacious, I now demand it, madam, as my right. Serious accusations as these are, must have a source; and even should I prove the criminal you believe me, the laws of my country sue for my not being condemned unheard;

therefore from justice,—since I seem, alas! bereft of every other advocate within the bosom of my benefactress,—I claim a solution to these charges, which now in ambush play the assassin's part mortally to wound my fame."

"Those charges are easily concentrated in their source. You have succeeded, Miss Frederick, in your perfidious attempt. You have won Lord Montalbert from your friend."

"Lord Montalbert! madam!" reiterated the amazed Rosabella, in tones of the most unequivocal astonishment. "Lord Montalbert! This is indeed a phantom from the creative fancy of the ingenious Mr. Sternham, which I must beg leave instantly to exorcise, by my solemn, sacred assurance, that I have knowingly never even yet beheld Lord Montalbert."

"Rosa, Rosa, proceed no further in this atrocious system of deceit; since it will no longer avail you; and your pretended belief of your clandestine suitor being any other individual than Lord Montalbert can no longer conceal you

from detection; since Mr. Sternham, with his own eyes, beheld you with his lordship on the rocks, where you had concerted your secret meetings; when, through a vain hope of counteracting the treacherous blow aiming by my *protégée* at my fondest hopes and wishes, he persuaded me to believe the man he found you with a notorious character, and then commenced his project for sending you from Ravenswood; whilst to you he gave unequivocal intimation, that your base project should be frustrated."

"Oh, madam!—Oh, Lady Derville!" faltered out the dreadfully agitated Rosabella, "let me perfectly comprehend you. Does Mr. Sternham mean to insinuate, that Lord Montalbert and Mr. Egremont are one and the same individual?"

"He absolutely affirms it."

"Impossible, impossible!" exclaimed poor Rosa, as, subdued by emotion almost too mighty for endurance, she sunk into a chair; and as she covered her face with her hands, she groaned in the anguish of her heart.

"No, Miss Frederick, no, it is not impossible; and this natural working of your wounded conscience proclaims you know it not impossible."

The unkindness of this unqualified suspicion of the cause of her emotion, from one so loved, so reverenced, now struck on the more tender tones of Rosa's feelings, and she burst into an agony of tears. Lady Derville continued—

"And did I require other conviction, than what the testimony of Mr. Sternham yields, I have it here, in a letter from O'Lurcher to my chaplain, in which he condoles with Mr. Sternham upon having lost all chance of obtaining your hand, as the Lord of St. Leonard's Abbey was his rival; since one of the tenants, whilst coursing rabbits, had overheard his lordship making unequivocal love to you, as he was leading your donkey in the neighbourhood of Myrtle's Town. Dare you deny this fact, Miss Frederick?"

"Madam," sobbed the heart-wrung Rosa, "I dare deny nothing that is a fact. The circumstance of my being, whilst

upon a donkey, and near a thicket, in which I afterwards observed a sportsman, addressed in the language of love, is certainly most true; but as to the individual who so addressed me being any other than he and his friends represented him—Mr. Egremont—I have a right to deny, until I have other proof than Mr. Sternham's, whom, in this his cruel calumny of me, I solemnly arraign of the monstrous turpitude of uttering falsehoods. Never, never did he, by any intimation whatsoever, lead me even to suspect the individual he found me seeking aid for on the rocks was Lord Montalbert. Oh that he had! at least if indeed the man, whom Mr. Trench and Captain Gore confirmed me in the belief was Mr. Egremont, is in fact his lordship."

"To you, Miss Frederick, this point must stand clear, as I once believed your conscience; since it is utterly impossible you could have wandered around Ravenswood, as you found plausible means of doing, without ascertaining the person of Lord Montalbert."

"Improbable as it may appear, I never did ascertain the form of Lord Montalbert; but if Egremont and his lordship are in truth the same individual, my crime against my Meliora's peace has been unconsciously committed. As Mr. Egremont he wooed me, and as Mr. Egremont he accomplished what Lord Montalbert never could have effected—he won my affections." Rosa with difficulty articulated, so convulsive were the sobs that burst from her agonized bosom. "But why,—for what purpose Lord Montalbert and his friends should deceive me, relative to his identity, I am so wholly at a loss to divine, that I must still hope it is impossible."

"The project might have been for the gratifying purpose," returned Lady Derville, with heart-torturing irony in her accents,—"to prove you loved him for himself alone; but proof, strong as testimony could providentially send us of your perfidy, came in an intercepted letter from his lordship to you; in which is clearly revealed, that it was at your request he

had dropped his title, during your clandestine wooing,—for in it he asks you, why you willed it so? The response was obvious. It was your *shield of pretence*: for if his lordship addressed you under a fictitious name, the dear innocent was exonerated from her load of treachery: for you were deluded by the romance of fiction."

"Where, madam, is that letter?" demanded the weeping Rosabella: "surely it cannot be ascribed to presumption in me, to claim my right of seeing that which forms my condemnation."

"Mr. Sternham has unfortunately mislaid it, in our removal from Albemarle Street."

"Mislaid it! Oh, cruel traducer!" softly murmured the heart-wrung Rosa.

"Miss Frederick, it ill becomes you to throw aspersions on a sacred character."

"Oh! Lady Derville, were you like me, menaced with the overthrow of every hope of earthly happiness, you would—knowing your own innocence, as I do,

—you would not scruple to make your accusations against your defamers, whatever sacred garb they might appear in. As my cruel defamer, madam, I pronounce Mr. Sternham; and from you, who have from my earliest infancy protected me with even maternal tenderness,—from you I claim the justice, to demand for me the proofs he has of my perfidy, my hypocrisy, my ingratitude, that they may be fairly and openly produced, either to be refuted or confirmed."

"From taking any part in a trial of such a nature, so insulting to the veracity of my chaplain, and wounding to my already too much tortured feelings, you must excuse me, madam."

"Alas!" sobbed Rosa, clasping her hands in agony, as her tears flowed in accumulating bitterness, "am I then to be condemned, by those too who have known every thought of my bosom from my infant helplessness, upon the mere unsubstantiated testimony of a man, whom I have converted into an implacable foe, because I could not love him? and who,

had he been that zealous upright friend to his patroness he affects to be, would have pursued no stealthy path, but the moment he discovered my treacherous plans, he would have unveiled me to your ladyship, and not have sought to take the perfidious viper to his own bosom, as the wife of his unbiassed choice."

"Mr. Sternham, madam, has accounted satisfactorily to me for every part of his conduct; but, as the proof stands confirmed against you, by his lordship's professed attachment, and possibly intended union with you; all investigation of the matter is unnecessary, since it could not now undo the mischiefs you have gratefully effected. My child's happiness is blasted:—my heart broken. Nor are these all the miseries you have inflicted on those who cherished you in their protecting bosoms for you to sting them, as you smiled in deceptious gratitude. You won the affections of my most beloved grandson,—and then, in the security of a superior conquest, bade him take back the affections you no longer prized; and sent

him, in the conflict of his wretchedness, to seek peace from that home where you had destroyed it for him, and in this direful dereliction of his home, I am taught the agonizing fear, that he has met his ruin."

Poor Rosa groaned in mental anguish, —alternately she pressed her palsied death-chilled hands against her throbbing temples, her bursting heart; and so amazed was every faculty by grief and dismay, that the being, whom she so tenderly loved and profoundly reverenced, should thus give credence to every evil representation of her, and in the dread shock of having—if the affirmation was true, of Lord Montalbert and Egremont being the same individual—destroyed the peace of those who had benignly sheltered her; all power of articulation seemed now suspended—Lady Derville proceeded.

"I rejoice for your sake, Miss Frederick, that your heart is not callous to your iniquities; since as crimes I must class your misconduct to me and my children; and therefore you cannot wonder—nor

can the world pronounce my conduct unfeeling,—that it is my fixed, unalterable determination, to replace you where I found you,—as the *protégée* of Mrs. Killbride, from whence Lord Montalbert can take you to his bosom as the sharer of his honours; and until he does so, the annuity I lately settled for you shall still be yours. I have arranged that to-morrow you commence your return to Ireland, under the protection of a highly respectable friend of my chaplain's; and accompanied by Betty Roach, the base confidant of your vile treachery.

"In the intermediate time, I leave this house to yourself, madam, to make the necessary preparations for your departure. The moment I have breakfasted I shall set out with my injured grandaughter,—whom it is my absolute command you hold no intercourse with, on any pretence whatsoever,—as I must take time gently to break to her the service you have rendered her. With her, I say, I shall set out for Richmond, to remain with Lady Elstow, until after the viper I have fostered departs for

that land, where it is said—though you have proved the tradition erroneous,—the power of venom dies."

The pride of conscious rectitude unjustly aspersed, condemned unheard, and treated with the harshness of a convicted criminal, arose with its shield of firmness in the tortured mind of Rosabella, and bore down hastily all the tender susceptibilities, so deeply wounded in this cruel conflict that were subduing her fortitude; and as her ladyship came to her close, she started from her seat, and swallowed some sups of water to remove the sensation of strangulation she was experiencing, as her pride-banished tears were struggling against suppression; when turning to Lady Derville, she with becoming dignity, yet tempered with submissive reverence, said—

"Your command, madam, shall be implicitly obeyed. I will not see Lady Meliora,—though Heaven, that knows all secrets of every heart, knows how torturing that forbearance must prove;—since I left her not,—not quite well."

"Not well! My child not well!" Lady Derville exclaimed, wringing her hands in a state little short of distraction. "Then the deed,—the direful deed of treachery is performed, and she is heart-rived on beholding, as Mr. Sternham did last night, you with your hand tenderly clasped by Lord Montalbert, while she was neglected by him."

This was a tender cord, that promptly vibrated upon the susceptibilities of Rosa; for such a thing was possible; and she might—yes, she might have been the unconscious cause of her beloved Meliora's dreadful agitation, and subsequent night of sleepless misery; and again her suspended tears began to flow with agony unutterable; and at that moment Lady Derville rushed by her, to the chamber of her grandaughter.

CHAPTER XVII.

"MELIORA, Meliora! prop of my age!—pride of my life! and darling of my heart!" Lady Derville wildly cried, as she entered, "what is it I hear? Are you indeed not well? Has the cruel shaft been flung too truly; and shall I lose you?"

"Dear grandmama," Lady Meliora exclaimed, as her astonishment arrested the tears she had uncontrolledly been shedding in the absence of our heroine, "what can Rosa have said so terribly to alarm you?" I am merely overcome by the fatigue of last night, and the dreadful alarm I sustained through that unfortunate conflagration. I sent her to tell you so, and to implore you to take me out of this odious London; the air of which I am convinced does not agree with me:—whilst I am also convinced a few days at Richmond will set me up again."

"Are you willing to commence the experiment this very day? Let me read your aspect, to learn if indeed you are equal to even this trifling fatigue."

The eyes of Lady Meliora sunk in conscious avoidance beneath the scrutinizing gaze of her venerable parent. Lady Derville groaned, and Lady Meliora endeavouring at firmness to turn annoying inquiry from her, assured her grandmother she was as able as anxious to set out immediately.

"Then, can you now arise and take your breakfast whilst dressing? since to confess the honest truth, I am anxious—very anxious to be gone, to escape—some very annoying intruders."

"Whom, grandmama?"

"O, several:—amongst whom, Lady Wilemore."

"For mercy, let us abscond then. I'll arise instantly; but send Rosa to breakfast with me."

"That,—that my love, I cannot do; for as I must leave her behind to transact all kinds of disagreeable business for me,

with—with a—with some troublesome tenants, who have followed me from Ireland; I have to give her all my instructions as we breakfast. But Dermot shall attend you."

"Since you cannot spare Rosa, I had much rather be left entirely to myself; for both Dermot and Betty would tease me with questions relative to the fête; therefore, send me my breakfast from your table, grandmama, by one of the English maids, who never presume to speak to me."

The heart-wrung Lady Derville, in full conviction the shaft was flung unerringly at her darling's peace, kissed her with a quivering lip, and then descended to her dressing-room, with no one feeling improved towards poor Rosabella by this visit to her idol.

But Rosa was not there to meet the increasing lower, for she had retreated to the dining-room, which at that hour of the day was her most secure asylum from observation, and where Lady Derville promptly found her, weeping bitterly, at the tor-

turing possibility of her having—although unconsciously,—destroyed the happiness of those she was so tenderly bound to through gratitude and affection.

"For the peace of my child, Miss Frederick," said her ladyship, in tones inflicting still deeper wounds through the bosom of poor Rosabella, "I am humbled to the condescension of imploring a favour, even from you."

From the centre of Rosa's heart escaped a deep-toned sigh. . . . .

"To prevent surmises amongst my domestics, which might reach the ears of my child—whom I wish to take hence, unapprised of the tortures her heart has yet to receive, for as yet, I believe, she is unconscious of her friend being the viper that has stung her,—I am compelled to request you to appear at my breakfast board once more, and the moment that repast is ended, I must further entreat you, either to conceal yourself in the green house, or to walk out with your confidant Betty, until my poor child departs for Richmond."

The wounded pride of our heroine again

dried her tears; and in obedience to the wishes of her long kind, and tender benefactress, she presided *once* more at the breakfast board.

This repast could not but prove an almost nominal one; and the interval passed at it being devoted to profoundly awful silence, Rosa had opportunity to give her agonizing thoughts free scope; and at length as she saw Lady Derville approach the termination of her successless attempt at breakfast, and concluding her own absence would too soon be wished for, she made a powerful struggle with her feelings, to permit her to articulate, without the convulsive emotion that seemed menacing suffocation, arising to prevent her utterance; and, tremulously, she said—

"As you have arranged for my departure, madam, not only from your family, but from London, to-morrow, no power is left me to ascertain whether the affirmation of Mr. Sternham, relative to the individual who addressed me at Myrtle's Town, is founded upon fact; for as Mr. Trench is not in town, I can make no immediate

application to him upon this important subject; and as it is absolutely essential for my mental arrangements, that I should obtain positive information, such as I can place faith in, your ladyship will, I trust, excuse my presumption, in requesting you to decide this material point for me.

"You have seen Lord Montalbert, madam; and,—and, I have a little sketch of resemblance I attempted of him I knew as Mr. Egremont; and as I had not—through a belief that all prospect of union with him was terminated for ever—had not communicated any thing relative to my unfortunate attachment to Lady Meliora; and fearing she might find the portrait, and question me about it, if I left it with my other drawings, I—I contrived a case to—but—but it matters to no one now, why I contrived to wear it in my bosom."

Rosa's blanched cheeks now mantled to a bright vermilion tint, as she drew a portrait from her bosom, and with quivering lip, bounding heart, and palsied hand, presented it to Lady Derville.

"Have the goodness, madam," she said, "to decide the fate of your insulated *protégée*. In your hand is my happiness or my misery. On you I rest for my sentence of life or death. Is it, or is it not, dearest Lady Derville, the resemblance of Lord Montalbert?"

"Of Lord Montalbert? Yes, — the most striking resembance of Lord Montalbert."

Rosabella groaned in mental agony, and sunk back in her chair, the semblance of transfixed despair.

"Oh! Rosa, deceptious Rosa! why was that concealment from Meliora practised—from the guileless, ingenuous Meliora, every secret of whose heart was open to you;—but in the consciousness of who it was you had perfidiously won from her?"

Rosa answered not; — for Rosa heard not. Every faculty seemed suspending fast, through the stunning torture her heart was writhing with; and "the wheel at the cistern" was pausing from its operation, when all her powers

were aroused to action, by a violent and hurried knock at the street door.

To escape from the observation of whoever thus was coming, was the first idea our heroine awoke to; when, starting from her seat, she wildly snatched the hand of the unprepared Lady Derville, carried it with convulsive energy to her lips, and with catching respiration, and faltering accents, she rapidly articulated,—

"Oh, my benefactress, what a farewell is this! But in the last moment we may perhaps ever meet, accept my grateful benediction; and credit my solemn assurances, that Betty Roach is guiltless of ingratitude to you."

And now hearing the approach of these intruding visitors, Rosabella rapidly effected her retreat from observation, into an adjoining room, from whence she shortly after escaped to the station in the remote green house Lady Derville had sentenced her to; and there remained, in all the poignant agony of mental anguish a bosom untortured by guilt could suffer from, until the departure of her once maternally kind

and affectionate benefactress and her tenderly beloved Meliora had taken place for Richmond—a departure retarded by the visitors Rosa had flown from, who proved to be Mrs. O'Dowd and Captain Duncombe.

Mrs. O'Dowd came in great distress to bid a hasty farewell, and to make her husband's apology for not calling to say adieu, ere they set out for Bath, whither they were summoned by a letter brought by that morning's post, announcing that Mrs. Alermont, Captain O'Dowd's mother, after having travelled over from Ireland, to facilitate her meeting with her adored son, had, on her arrival at Bath, been taken so dangerously ill, that no time could be lost in summoning them to attend her.

Captain Duncombe was only just arrived in town, after the nuptials of Miss Neville; and panting to commence the siege of Rosa's heart, Mrs. O'Dowd made him escort her to Sloane Street, where great was his disappointment, on learning that Miss Frederick was gone with Lady Meliora to Bryanstone Square; for such was

the excuse Lady Derville thought it expedient to make, for the non-appearance of the two young ladies, to say adieu to Mrs. O'Dowd; whose distress our readers may suppose sincere, when she breathed not one lamentation at the prospect before her, of having all her stylish Parisian costume laid aside until out of fashion's date, for the sable habiliment of sorrow.

For nearly two long lagging hours had Rosabella been consigned to her humiliating ambush in the green house, where the solace of her time was agonizing meditation, with bitter, bitter tears; and the moment the sound of the wheels, that were bearing her benefactress and her Meliora in disunion from her, died on her eager ear, she rushed from her concealment in anguish almost too mighty for endurance; and flew to a small closet within the chamber she had occupied with Lady Meliora, and which had been appropriated to her as a dressing room; where now she secured herself from observation, whilst on her knees she

devoutly and fervently implored, from pitying Heaven, firmness to bear her sorrows with submissive resignation.

Rosa had said to Lady Meliora, the preceding night, her faith on piety's soft balm had never failed her; and now in the most torturing moment of her life she proved its efficacy: for her fortitude strengthened as she prayed; and she arose from her knees comparatively composed to commune with her own thoughts upon the important subject of the line of conduct she should pursue, now she was cast from the favour and protection of her long tenderly cherishing benefactress, arraigned and condemned as a defaulter of the most perfidious stamp.

But nearly had the Heaven-inspired fortitude of Rosabella found its suspension, if not its overthrow, when as she arose from her knees, she beheld a billet directed to herself from Lady Meliora, lying upon her dressing table. With faculties almost subjugated by apprehen-

sion of what new wounds for her bleeding heart it might contain, she with tremulous fingers broke the seal, and contrived to read, although the uneven characters of Lady Meliora's unsteady hand danced and floated before her as unsteady vision—

"My own beloved Friend,

"WHY is it that I am thus strangely hurried to Richmond, without seeing you? Ah! in grandmama's agitated manner and pallid countenance, I am led to a solution, and my fears have foundation; and you, my tender Rosa, are too much affected at the blow thus unexpectedly given to my happiness, to be permitted by her yet to see me. But, perhaps it is the misfortunes of my poor Charles, and not mine, that thus unnerve her; and you have mine yet to hear, still more to overpower you both;—for well I know how your hearts will bleed for me, when you hear I beheld Montalbert in the park last night, and all my golden dream of happiness was dissolved.

"It was in the moment before I rushed back to you,—so heart-broken, so undone, —that I suddenly came in contact with the cruelly inconstant man, who started on beholding me so near; and, in his first impulse, seemed anxious to effect his escape from my recognition; but when he perceived that was impossible, his bow of mere common *politesse*, his retiring manner altogether, came like the withering sirocco to my hopes,—blighting each sweet blossom of my promised happiness.

"Oh Rosa, you who seemed inspired by some prophetic influence, to forebode this dreadful dereliction!—Oh Rosa, you who never yet deceived me, I implore, I importune you, to employ some of those hours you are left to solitude in town, to discover for me, through the medium of your friend Mr. Trench, how I can have lost my influence on Montalbert's heart!—in short, all you can with delicacy discover for me, and hasten to impart all without reserve, — although

the intelligence may rend at once the heart of

"My Rosabella's
"Most attached,
"And most affectionate
"Friend and Sister,
"MELIORA MONSON."
"August 2d, 1814."

The moment the eyes of the tortured Rosabella reached the signature, her head sunk back against the wainscot, near which she was seated, and her arms fell by her sides, in all the listlessness of despondence; whilst through her ears rung and fell in hollow murmurs on her heart—which now reverberated all things sonorously, since happiness blighted there seemed to have turned to pining echo, still loudly to repeat each theme of misery—the voice of her friend resounding, "O Rosa, you who never yet deceived me!" whilst before her visual ray, flitted the wan, the upbraiding countenance of her benefactress, as she ascribed to her the

lost happiness of her grandaughter, the ruin of her grandson.

On hearts of susceptibility acute feeling sometimes acts in the moment of calamity like the sirocco's blast, destroying each budding blossom of hope's formation; and turning the future path of life into the dreary desert of cheerless misery: so in Rosabella's heart all now seemed desolation. But as her anguished thoughts wandered through her lonely wastes of future wretchedness, she suddenly beheld a brightened ray in the dark perspective; —yet not of mundane character; for it was the living light, reflected from the beams of lively faith; when instantly her hands sprung to each other in energetic grasp, and firmly she articulated—

"No, not in this transitory world is happiness for me—but I will secure it in a better; and the living light shall guide me through my path of present misery, to find my steady way to where no cruel sting shall wound the heart of innocence."

CHAPTER XVIII.

The path which the principles of Rosabella presented to her was one of bitterness and wo, in which every barbed arrow that could wound the heart of tender unalienable attachment were hovering to assail her; but rectitude commanded her to enter it, and gratitude gifted her with courage to obey; and this with the promptitude of desperation, since nothing but promptitude could effect her purpose: and in the heroic resolution of her principles, to consign herself at once to temporal misery, she emerged from her closet to proceed, when to her infinite annoyance she found Betty in the chamber anxiously waiting for her, who, the moment she appeared, exclaimed—

"Oh Miss Rosa dear! and for the blessed Saint Patrick's sake, will you be telling me, why or wherefore you and I are to

be packed off to Ireland. Mrs. Dermot came to me from my lady, just as they were setting out to Richmond, to order me to prepare your baggage and my own, for setting out for Myrtle's Town to-morrow morning, where your affairs recalled you instantly; that I was to attend you, and a friend of ould Vinegar's to protect us over; and she put this bank-note into my hand, to pay for bringing me to Myrtle's Town; and bid me deliver this letter from my lady to you, who felt too much at your unexpected departure to be able to take leave of you."

"Betty," said Rosa, endeavouring, but ineffectually, at a steady voice; "Betty, you have already heard from Mrs. Dermot all that is necessary for you to know, relative to this my very unexpected return to Ireland; you therefore now will have the kindness to do for me what Lady Derville had the goodness to desire, and pack my clothes; whilst I go out for a short time to make a few farewell calls."

"It is true, jewel," replied Betty, "I did hear from Mrs. Dermot all that was

necessary to *tell* me; for in that face of a dead corpse you have got, instead of your own, I can read more than is pleasant for me. Oh! from such ministers may Heaven deliver us! since who but can know it is all the handy-work of old grim *Worrum*-wood, through poor spite, because you were not bewitched into marrying him, the scarecrow! So this was the exploit of that two hours' cabal last night; and the father of lies contrived to send you off, jewel, in disgrace. Faith, and tis often myself wonders, how his kingdom below gets on, whilst he has stepped up from his throne to favour us with his precious company: — but sorrow morsel need he think, or my dear Lady either, that I will suffer you to go, Miss, nor myself venture, with a protector of his providing, without taking cognizance of his two feet. Ay, faith, *fut* by *fut* I'll examine the gentleman, before we'll step out with him.

"And Judy Kilmanus might well say it was a mysterious, and a very suspicious thing to boot, when *Worrum*wood was

sick, and that the doctor ordered a *fut* bath for him, and she kindly offered to assist him, thinking it would be too weak he'd be, to stoop himself, and not a morsel would he accept her kindness.—But sure, dear, it is not alone you'd be walking out?"

"No," faltered Rosa, "I shall get into a hackney coach."

"There now," exclaimed Betty, "is another strange thing; you were not allowed to see Mrs. O'Dowd, and that other fine young gentleman, when they called this morning, or you could have gone your visits with them."

Rosa now asked a few questions, which drew from the communicative Betty the cause of Mrs. O'Dowd's early visit; and although the poor insulated Rosabella found from this intelligence, that in the British metropolis she had no longer any old friend left to comfort her, yet, as the misery that overwhelmed her was of too delicate a nature to permit her seeking advisers, although she must have abettors, she felt it almost as a relief that the O'Dowds

were called away, lest they might have crossed her path in her anxious undertaking, infinitely to embarrass her.

Rosa, now equipped for her meditated expedition, descended to the drawing room, to peruse the letter of Lady Derville, which she found short and cold, enclosing the portrait of Lord Montalbert, and a bank note to defray the expense of her journey to Mrs. Kilbride, with information, "that Lord Montalbert, when he called in Sloane Street to pay his devoirs to her, should be informed of the place of her destination, that no time might be lost in the completion of her triumph."

The unmerited cruelty of this brief address, although it wrung the feeling heart of the affectionate Rosa, yet, as it also inflicted new wounds upon her pride of rectitude, it seemed gifted with the useful power of increasing her fortitude.

This heart-chilling termination to all further communication between the misguided benefactress and her *protégée*,

written in the effervescence of Lady Derville's wounded feelings, in full conviction of the enormous turpitude of a monster of art and ingratitude, the agitated Rosa carefully deposited in her writing-desk; and then, with trembling heart and frame, walked to the nearest stand of coaches, got into one, and ordered it to stop in one of the nearest avenues to Mansfield Street.

The conflict in Rosabella's mind, during the interval of inaction in this ride from Knightsbridge to her place of destination, defies our power to delineate; but perhaps the lively imagination of our readers may form some idea of what she endured, when they learn the nature of the sacrifice her mind was now intent on.

With a frame convulsed by agitation, a heart chilled by grief, and fluttering in apprehension of how her wild project—for she felt it was wild, but her cruel destiny allowed her no alternative—might succeed, she quitted her hackney vehicle at the appointed place, and then proceeded on foot to Lord Flowerdew's; and

when the fearful signal was given, that chained her to this door, a candidate for admission, the bounding of her heart might be distinctly heard.

The door was opened, and to the almost inarticulate demand of the trembling Rosa, "if Lady Flowerdew was at home?" the porter replied in the negative. To meet with Lady Flowerdew at home, had been Rosabella's only hope of succour in her difficulties: this now was wrested from her, and with such a bitter pang of disappointment the negative struck to her heart, that in defiance of every exertion, she burst into tears, and was compelled to request a glass of water from the porter, pleading a sudden indisposition as the cause; when the man civilly ushered her into a parlour, and hastened for the water; but ere he could return with it, a message came from Lady Flowerdew—who was rapidly apprised by her own footman, that Miss Frederick was taken ill at the door—to request her to hasten, if possible, to her dressing room.

With a difficulty, which her powerful

exertions could scarcely accomplish, the dreadfully agitated Rosabella obeyed the summons of Lady Flowerdew, who, subdued by the fatigue of the preceding day, after dispatching the Miss Lorrains and her children to Wimbledon, had issued orders for no one to be admitted.

The moment Lady Flowerdew's eyes rested on the face of our poor heroine, she there beheld the legible record of sorrow's desolation; beheld the mournful glance, and green and yellow aspect of blighted happiness; and instantly she started from the sofa she was reclining on, and flying to her, caught her by both hands, and kindly drawing her towards the sofa, eagerly demanded, in the tone of affectionate interest, "what was her ailment?"

"Oh! madam," Rosa replied, as she melted into tears, "your penetrating eye can readily perceive that mine is mental, not bodily ailment; but on yonder table I perceive some water, permit me to drink a little, to overcome this impeding emotion."

Lady Flowerdew herself most kindly administered some restoratives; but that she derived most effectual benefit from was her own mental exertion; since she found agony in the incertitude of whether her ladyship could or would yield her aid, too oppressive for endurance; and consequently she summoned every faculty of firmness to lead to its speedy termination.

"Oh! madam," she at length falteringly said, with catching respiration, and every indicative of powerful agitation; "forgive the liberty, which the opinion I have formed of your character has led me to the presumption of taking with you; even to implore your aid, without the power of confiding to you the dire cause of my finding such a supplication necessary.

"Lady Flowerdew, in my almost infancy, Lady Derville found me an insulated orphan, whose melancholy helplessness led her to take me to her sheltering bosom, which from that hour has proved to me the easy pillow of maternal tenderness; but

from it I now must fly, and fly in secrecy. —Oh! Lady Flowerdew, a painful circumstance has occurred to make the desperation necessary, for the happiness of my benefactress and her family, that I should disappear for ever from their power to trace, as well as from their view.

"The cause, the fatal, the unforeseen cause of this necessity, is of that delicate nature, that no murmur of it can ever escape my lips:—yet it compels me to fly, and with almost instantaneous promptitude, into impenetrable shade; for I must, Lady Flowerdew,—I must sink like a stone precipitated into the ocean, over which the unfathomable waters close, to shut out every trace;—since only by this means can I secure the peace of my benefactress and my own rectitude.

"Can you, will you, madam, befriend an individual, compelled to the adoption of such suspicious disingenuousness? Know you, Lady Flowerdew, where, on the surface of the globe, you can send me, to an asylum where I can be secure from the evils of improper society, whilst I earn my

own subsistence; for earn it I must,—since the moment I depart I must relinquish all that the benevolence of my benefactress had secured to me; since any mode of pecuniary transaction must indubitably lead to a discovery of my refuge; whither I must fly as the arrow through the air, leaving no trace behind. But what is more wounding to my tortured feelings, than even my dire estrangement from all who ever knew or loved me, is the compulsion of leaving them in total ignorance of the fatal cause of my apparently ungrateful dereliction." The tears of Rosa, drawn to an overflow by this torturing reflection, now stopped the power of further utterance; when, to animate her hope of succour from her ladyship, she beheld the tears of sympathy flowing down the cheeks of Lady Flowerdew.

Fortunately for the wish of the almost heart-broken Rosabella, the history told of her illegitimate affinity to the Derville family, by Mrs. O'Dowd, was still in the memory of her auditress, and con-

veyed at once conviction to her mind of the cause of this desperate resolution, in her having imbibed an unfortunate reciprocity of attachment to Mr. Monson, and that a just-made discovery of their fatal consanguinity had driven her to adopt this measure of concealment, until in hopeless absence both had found their cure; for that Charles was attached to Rosa, her ladyship had developed in the first hour she had seen them together; and the circumstance of her fainting the preceding evening, as related to her by Mary Lorrain, in so suspicious a moment, left not a doubt on her mind of the nature of the calamity that thus blighted the happiness of poor Rosabella.

An affair of that delicate nature, her ladyship thus under natural error conceived it to be, could not indeed, she thought, be discussed; since to a mind so refinedly susceptible, as she saw this unfortunate young woman's unaffectedly was, even the slightest intimation that such a horror was suspected, she felt full persuasion would prove a shock too powerful to be sus-

tained; and in the confused view she thus had power to take of the dreadful business, she thought the resolution of Rosabella to fly, as she meditated—although a most heart-rending sacrifice to duty—yet the wisest and most effectual she could adopt; and after a moment's serious reflection upon the subject, she kindly replied, with evident symptoms of the strong interest our heroine had awakened in her sympathizing bosom—

"My dear Miss Frederick, I will rest implicitly upon your word, for the necessity of the desperate measure you wish to pursue; and without presuming to wound your feelings by a question, endeavour to aid you in your laudable purpose:—but Lord Flowerdew must be admitted into our confidence. I never act in any matter of importance without his counsel; and for your sake, my dear unfortunate, it will be the safest way to procure his advice and aid."

"Oh! madam," responded the sorrowing Rosa, "I cannot confide even in you, the cause of my desperate resolution; and

Lord Flowerdew will not rest implicitly upon my assurance of the propriety of so apparently romantic and suspicious a measure."

"Fear not. I think my representation will lead my lord to a conviction of the necessity of your flight; but ere I go to him, there is one question I fain would ask you; since I can perceive no interdiction to my doing so. Is Lady Derville acquainted with the cause, that has operated upon your forming your present resolution?"

"She is the only person in full possession of every particular relative to it, madam; and from her I this morning received the fatal intelligence that has signed my fate."

"Then why, my dear Miss Frederick, need you any other confidant? Would not she, who knows every circumstance of the case, prove the most competent adviser, the most able agent?"

"Alas! no, madam," said Rosa, bursting into an agony of tears; "Lady Derville believes me culpable;—she believes I

was *not* ignorant of— of circumstances :— but, Heaven knows, Lady Flowerdew, I was as unconscious of them, as your own innocent babes :—but—but she, alas! has been led to believe, I voluntarily sent the shaft to her heart; and therefore my project of impenetrable disappearance is formed as much to convey conviction to her bosom of my not being the ingrate she conceives me, as to annihilate the miseries my stay would cause : — and by my flight, Lady Derville, madam, will better know, than any person in existence, save myself, how to appreciate the sacrifice I make."

" Heroic young woman!" exclaimed her ladyship, pressing her with venerating admiration and pitying kindness to her bosom; " I will question you no more; but will exert myself to aid you in the purposes of your virtuous principles. No one shall here break in upon you during my conference with my lord, who is fortunately at home."

Lady Flowerdew now departed to consult her able adviser; and our poor heroine, during the interval of her absence,

by fervent supplications to the Dispenser of all benefits, for firmness to bear all that was His Divine will she should suffer, so effectually calmed the anguish of her agitation, that when her ladyship returned, accompanied by her lord, the sublime aspect of Heaven-inspired resignation Rosabella wore penetrated to the hearts of both, and added to that powerful feeling of interest, her voluntarily-planned sacrifice of herself in the cause of duty had forcibly awakened.

Lord Flowerdew, from having been many years of his life a pleader, as well as judge at sessions, had brought before him so much depravity, ingratitude, and callousness of heart in human nature, that where he found the reverse it awakened so much enthusiasm of admiration, that he ever felt almost willing to fall down and worship the possessor; and Lady Flowerdew's representations of Rosabella's meditated sacrifice, given as it was in feeble colouring, compared to what its true source would have called for, through her ladyship's erroneous belief of the operating cause,

won his esteem and interest so competely for the poor victim to duty, that he entered his wife's dressing-room as very a Quixote as any distressed damsel in romance could wish to aid her; and as eager to promote her effectual concealment from her fatally related lover, until their mutually unfortunate attachment had been subdued by absence and their sense of duty, as a heart firm in benevolence and rectitude could make him.

Convinced of the imperative nature of the mandate for Rosabella's instantaneous flight, yet respecting the delicacy of her torturing situation, Lord and Lady Flowerdew now arranged for her secret and prompt departure to a secure asylum, without paining her by any questions they feared might further wound her too evidently anguished heart; whilst with the most lively gratitude our poor self-devoted victim to her principles, had the consolation to find her zealous and sympathizing friends knew of a retreat, whither they had power instantly to send her; nor did she for one moment shrink from her anx-

ious wish to fly to its refuge, by the candid avowal of her kind friends, that it would not be to a life of comfort she would consign herself; since the lady, for whom they were at that very moment employed to seek out a suitable companion, was one of the most gloomy bigots the Catholic persuasion had ever known; and her mansion, encompassed by a moat, secluded from the cheering intercourse of any species of society.

The seclusion of the mansion comprised all that duty left the heart of Rosa to desire; whilst the gloom of bigotry possessed small terrors for one so well versed in all the love of forbearance, and in all the firm but mild orthodoxy of the Christian faith, as taught to her by the Bishop of ——; and no unfavourable representation could deter her from thankfully accepting the post of companion to the recluse of the moat, with an adequate salary, and all expenses of her journey into Yorkshire defrayed for her.

But how to arrange for this long journey with secrecy, speed, and safety, seem-

ed for some time to puzzle one even learned in the laws;—but soon the apprehension of insecurity was removed, by recollection of a tenant of his lordship's, then in town, an old farmer, who was to set out that very night in the mail for York, and to whom Lord Flowerdew knew he could not only confide the care of Rosa, but easily prevail upon to save his travelling expenses, by taking a place in the chaise, and a part in the meals provided for the poor fugitive.

The other matters, although difficult they appeared at first to arrange, Lady Flowerdew at length succeeded in planning, and the sorrowing Rosa, apprehensive a long protracted absence from Sloane Street might awaken suspicion of who were the agents in her effectual disappearance, at last took her mournful leave of Lord and Lady Flowerdew, with a heart, however chilled by misery, warm with animated gratitude to them, not only for the secure asylum they had provided for her, but for much wise counsel for conduct, in her new and trying transition

from nominal to perceptible dependence.

The die was now cast, and the poor dependent insulated Rosabella had pledged herself to fly from affluence, exalted rank, and concomitant distinction; and above all, from the man of her tender, unalienable affections, as a voluntary sacrifice to gratitude and friendship: but now, as the decree of her rectitude had become irrevocable, the torture of tearing herself from Lord Montalbert—of inflicting wounds upon his generous and fervently attached heart, by her mysterious, and to him atrociously ungrateful dereliction — became more agonizing; and yet, whilst her pangs of anguished suffering became still more excruciating each passing moment, she shrunk not from the painful task, which arbitrary duty assigned for her performance.

CHAPTER XIX.

On the return of our heroine to Sloane Street, the desolation of the mansion struck with the chill of grief to her sorrowing heart; for its desolation had been caused by misapprehension of her principles; and the benefactress, who had tenderly and benignly reared her, had flown from her as the envenomed viper that had stung the unsuspecting bosom which nurtured it. The susceptibilities of Rosa were so overpowered by the shafts thus wounding them, she was compelled to hasten to her little sanctuary, to implore from the mercy of Heaven the preservation of her firmness.

From the communicative Betty, Rosa learned, that immediately after she had set out, Lord Derville arrived from Bryanstone Square, where all was consternation, as the two heiresses missed the preceding evening, it was now ascertained, had eloped

to Gretna Green with two pennyless speculators: that his lordship, in consequence of a note left for him by his grandmother, had immediately ordered a chaise and followed her to Richmond: and that he was scarcely gone, when Mr. Monson called, in an apparent great flutter of agitation, inquired first for her, then for his brother, and, evidently much chagrined that neither was at home, departed.

Rosa felt alarm and distress at the disappointment of poor Charles, at finding neither his brother nor her, since she doubted not some direful emergency had led him to seek them; whilst for herself she believed it a matter of congratulation to have escaped him, since the present state of her mind could ill sustain any addition to the conflict it endured.

The wardrobe of Rosabella was not of that extent to make the task of compressing it for travelling a tedious process. The moment her baggage was matted and corded, she ordered it to be placed in the hall in readiness for removal; and as

Betty had now her packages to make up, which Rosa could not exonerate her from the trouble of without betraying her own project, our sorrowing heroine was left to that solitude necessary for her endeavour to make her epistolary adieu to her beloved and revered benefactress.

And this poor Rosa found no easy task; for were she to allow her wounded feelings influence over her pen, she feared they might assume the appearance of resentment; and, even write what she might, nothing could be able to convey, she felt assured, in the moment of misapprehension of her, any conviction of the sincerity of her heart. Thus with many a bitter tear and pang, she with trembling grief-chilled hand wrote her farewell; a composition by no means satisfactory to her wishes; for her sensibilities under the constraint of prudence, the simple pathos, that would have rendered it an affecting address, was fettered; but in the present distraction of her mind, believing herself about to erase happiness from her heart's tablet for ever,

she could form no hope of any other attempt proving more successful than the following formal address—

" Right Hon. Countess Derville."

" MADAM,

" Whilst the present impressions you have been led to imbibe of me influence your mind, any attempt of mine would prove a useless measure to convince you, even in a last farewell, that every pulse in my now painfully agitated heart throbs with pure, lively, and unvanquishable gratitude to you, for the incalculable debt of benefits I owe to your benevolence. To time therefore I leave the power of presenting conviction to your ladyship's mind, that the maternal tenderness you made me happy by, for nearly sixteen years, was not lost, like the refreshing dews of Heaven that drop upon a desert sand.

" Equally useless, madam, would prove any further effort upon my part, to convince you of my innocence; since already, before Heaven and you, I made solemn

protestation of it; but, although your ladyship disbelieved me,—'a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which has wings shall tell the matter,' with better success than I have done:—all now therefore that remains for me to attempt, in my vindication from the direful charges of Mr. Sternham, is, to present you, madam, with an irrefragable proof, that whilst Mr. Egremont won my affections, Lord Montalbert was not the object of my ingratitude's pursuit. For that proof I present my secret flight into the impenetrable shade of obscurity; whither—as every clew has been destroyed—no pursuit can ever trace me; and thus, madam, I leave the field open, without my counteracting perfidious arts, to all your wishes, relative to the deservedly beloved object of your tenderest solicitude.

"As my flight will be effected without my attempting any intimation of it to—to Lord Montalbert, upon your ladyship must unavoidably devolve the disagreeable task of announcing it to Mr. Trench,—who, on Thursday, madam, will call upon

you for a very, very different purpose;—but, although I must implore the pitying kindness of your heart to tell him guardedly of my mysterious disappearance—for I know it will shock and wound him,—yet, palliate not my transgression against Lord Montalbert by any attempt at my vindication; for as I immolate myself as the sacrifice to the unfortunate deception that has been practised, allow the sacrifice to be complete. In his lordship's belief of my ingratitude to him,—of my duplicity—of my every atrocity in the hateful form of inconstancy and perfidious cruelty, lies his hope of prompt and perfect cure.

"I go too, madam, without addressing one line to Lady Meliora, for I know not of an excuse to offer for my mysterious flight; since invention is not my fort—although the pupil of Mr. Sternham;—and the true cause she must ever remain uninformed of; for earnestly and solemnly I conjure your ladyship, never to impart to her, that the man she loves wooed another; for alas! in the path of unconsciousness

we both have strayed to the mutual menace of each other's happiness; I have learned how much she is attached :—but let that fatal menace fall in certainty only upon mine; let my beloved Meliora never know, that in her hapless friend she had an unconscious rival; and let every measure be adopted that delicacy towards her can sanction, to promote this union; for as my happiness has been my own voluntary sacrifice—O let not the heart-rending immolation prove a vain one, since the only consolation I can hope for, as a balm for my own sufferings, will be through the intimation conveyed to me by some charitable newspaper, of my beloved Meliora being at length united to a man I know deserving of her goodness; and Lord Montalbert to the woman, who of all others will soonest restore him to that happiness, which my delinquency towards him must, alas! for a time so cruelly destroy.

"Believe me, my benefactress! my long, long tenderly maternal friend! that no inspiration of resentment actuates my restoration of that deed of your benevolence,

so recently—so benignly executed in my favour.—No, madam, it has been solely caused by the impossibility of my ever receiving the benefit your goodness intended I should derive from it, without presenting a clew to that asylum it has become my torturing duty ever to conceal from you.

"As the measure I have resolved upon adopting will have been effected, madam, many hours ere this farewell can reach your hands, perhaps, when your eyes rest on this line, your belief of my veracity may have found some softening influence; and, under the impression of that cheering hope, I venture to assure you, that Betty Roach has in no one action of her life relative to me forfeited her claim to your ladyship's favour.

"Knowing the heart of my benefactress more completely than she, alas! does that of her long happily cherished *protégée*, I am led to the presumption of adding, that which I feel will prove welcome intelligence to you. The refuge I am flying to is safe, honourable, unexceptionable

in every point in which propriety is vulnerable.

"My now anguished heart, madam, bids you that farewell, which almost sixteen years of unremitting tender care inspire; and although this is, alas! a final adieu, its aspirations for blessings to shower down on the head of my benefactress, and the dear companions of my life of happiness, can never, never cease.

"Adieu!—That Heaven's protection may ever encompass those I am leaving, shall daily form the first and last prayer of

"ROSABELLA."

The formation of this epistle, where her feelings were so painfully restrained by the dictates of her reason, proved a severe conflict to our poor heroine; and sent her, when it was at length completed, to invoke a new supply of firmness through the interposition of her piety.

At length the dinner of poor Rosa was announced; and although appetite with anguished grief like hers was incompa-

tible, she attended the sad summons to her solitary repast, in the forlorn hope of performing the necessary achievement of taking even the most trifling portion of nourishment, to aid in supporting her through her approaching long and fatiguing journey.—But this solitary meal of the lonely condemned culprit was served in the family dining room—where now were all that family?—why dispersed?—were torturing questions, that wrung her very soul.

In that room too Charles had taken his last affecting leave of her; she should now never hear the source of his entanglement;—should never learn if his extrication from ruin was effected;—she should never—no never behold him or any of the dear friends and protectors of her early insulation more; and as this sad, sad certainty struck to her heart's core, she burst into tears, and precipitately arose from table and fled to the drawing room, followed as rapidly as his race-impeding years would admit of by the venerable

sympathizing Conolly, bearing in his hands a decanter with wine and a glass.

"My dear Miss Rosa," said the good old man, tears trembling in his age-dimmed eyes—"my dear Miss Rosa, oblige an old but humble friend by drinking even one half glass of wine, to support you through this long and most unexpected journey to Ireland."

Rosa gratefully took the offered glass in her hand, and with quivering lip endeavoured to articulate her wish for health and happiness to yield their cheering rays to his winter of life; but in the anguish of her feelings utterance was destroyed, yet her look was so eloquently kind, it wrung the old man's heart, and drew the hovering tears in trickling streams down his furrowed cheeks.

"Ah! Miss Rosa," he faltered out, "mine is not the presumption to be asking improper questions; but thoughts cannot offend—and mine tell me this sad business is all the work of one, who ought to tremble at disparaging the sacred coat

upon his back. Blessed indeed are the peace-makers :—not the servers of strife.—But, Miss Rosa dear, allow him not to murder you with grief; and, drink—pray drink this drop of wine,—let that cheer your spirits, and then return to your dinner; or will I bring you a morsel here?"

Rosabella gulped down her wine and her sobs together, and was just sufficiently renovated by the cordial influence of Conolly's prescription lowly to articulate, "that if he kindly brought her one morsel she would endeavour to eat it; but in the dining-room the absence of the family subdued her."

Conolly's benevolent anxiety for her to take some nourishment was so evident, that the grateful Rosabella compelled herself to swallow a few mouthfuls; and then, as he was about to remove her plate, she presented him with her packet for Lady Derville.

"To your discretion, my good and kind friend," she falteringly said, "I confide it

for delivering it safely to her ladyship, on her return from Richmond to-morrow; —but not in the presence of Lady Meliora."

The good old man took the packet with a trembling hand, articulated his promise of faithful delivery with an unsteady voice, and hurried from the room, to conceal a rising tear of grief, for that disgrace which the misrepresentations of Mr. Sternham had evidently brought this favourite of all the household into with his misguided lady.

Shortly after the departure of Conolly, Betty entered, to inquire if our heroine had any commissions to execute in town, which she could do for her, as she was going to make some purchases for herself, and some compliments for her particular friends at Ravenswood.

"And indeed, for that matter, Miss," she added, "all the servants, barring Conolly and the cook, who would rather be looking into the toss-pans than at any fine sight, are just stepping into Hyde

Park to look about us,—and, oh! Miss Rosa, but it will be a long time before you and I can expect to see such elegant sights even at Ravenswood, let alone Myrtle's Town; for in the last place, and more grief to us! we shall have nothing to cheer us but a prospect of being *drowned*, or crossed in love; and in the former, but the expectation of finding ourselves murdered by the rebels in the night, when we awake every morning. But, Miss Rosa dear, Conolly will bring up your tea as soon as you please to ring for it; and the rest of us will be home in proper time."

This intelligence of so unexpected a migration of almost the entire household, was a great relief to Rosa, who had trembled in apprehension of being detected by some one of the domestics in the moment of her escape; and now, hearing of such a reduction in possible observers, cheered her with the hope of an undiscovered flight.

That hope was realized:—but not until

an interval had passed in inactive solitude, menacing an overthrow to the painfully reared structure of poor Rosa's fortitude; for as in that interval thought was her only companion, all that could torture her susceptibility passed in sad review before her; all she was torn by duty from acquired more precious value in the tenderness of her regrets, in this her cruelly impelled dereliction; and all that lay before her, more terrors, in the appalling uncertainty her future lonely path was sombred by. But although her heart was writhing in sorrow's bitterest anguish, it shrunk not from the heroism it had prompted; and although her eyes were bathed in tears of tortured love's most poignant misery, they watched unfalteringly for the signal that was at once to blight her every brilliant hope of temporal happiness, and send the barbed shaft from her duty-impelled hand, through the generous inestimable heart of him she loved.

At length the dread signal was given

by Lord Flowerdew's own valet, as determined in the morning, to announce a chaise in waiting at the end of the street; and although the signal struck on her heart like the knell of death to the ear of the criminal leading out to execution, Rosa, the trembling in frame —but firm in purpose—Rosa, hesitated not one moment to attend its call.

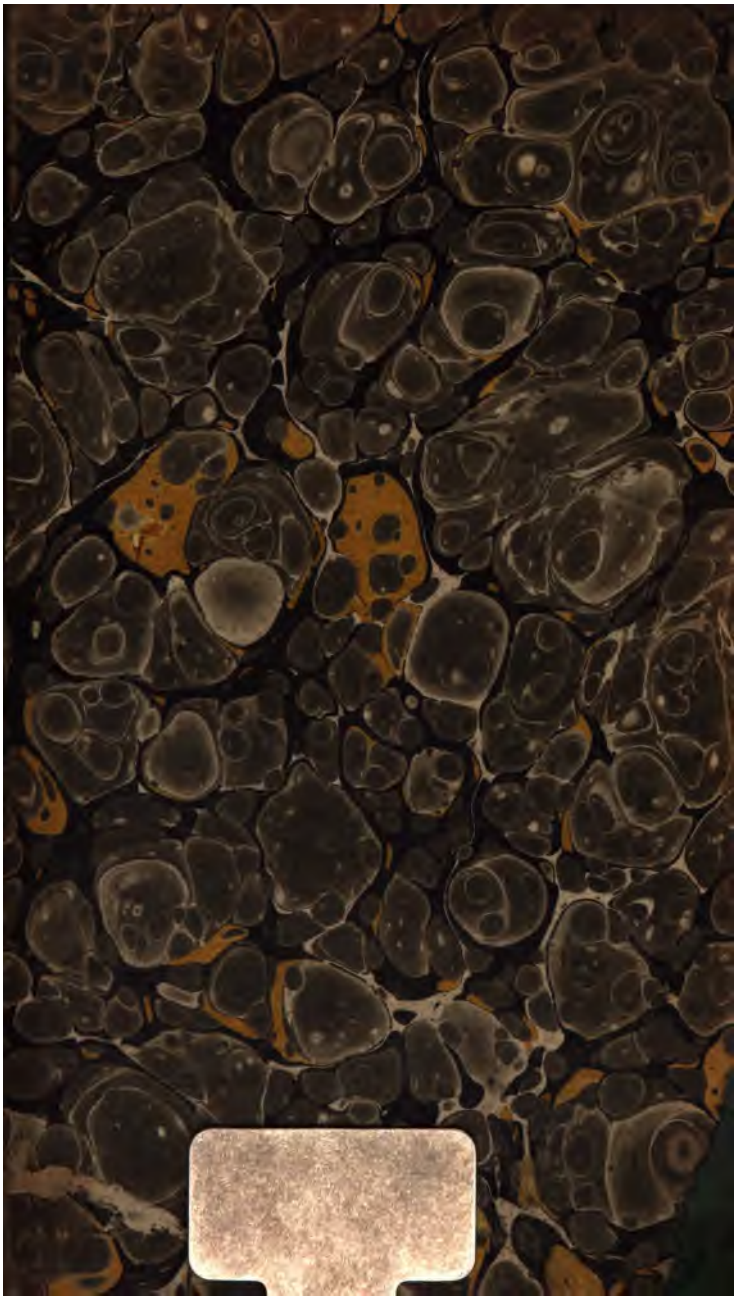
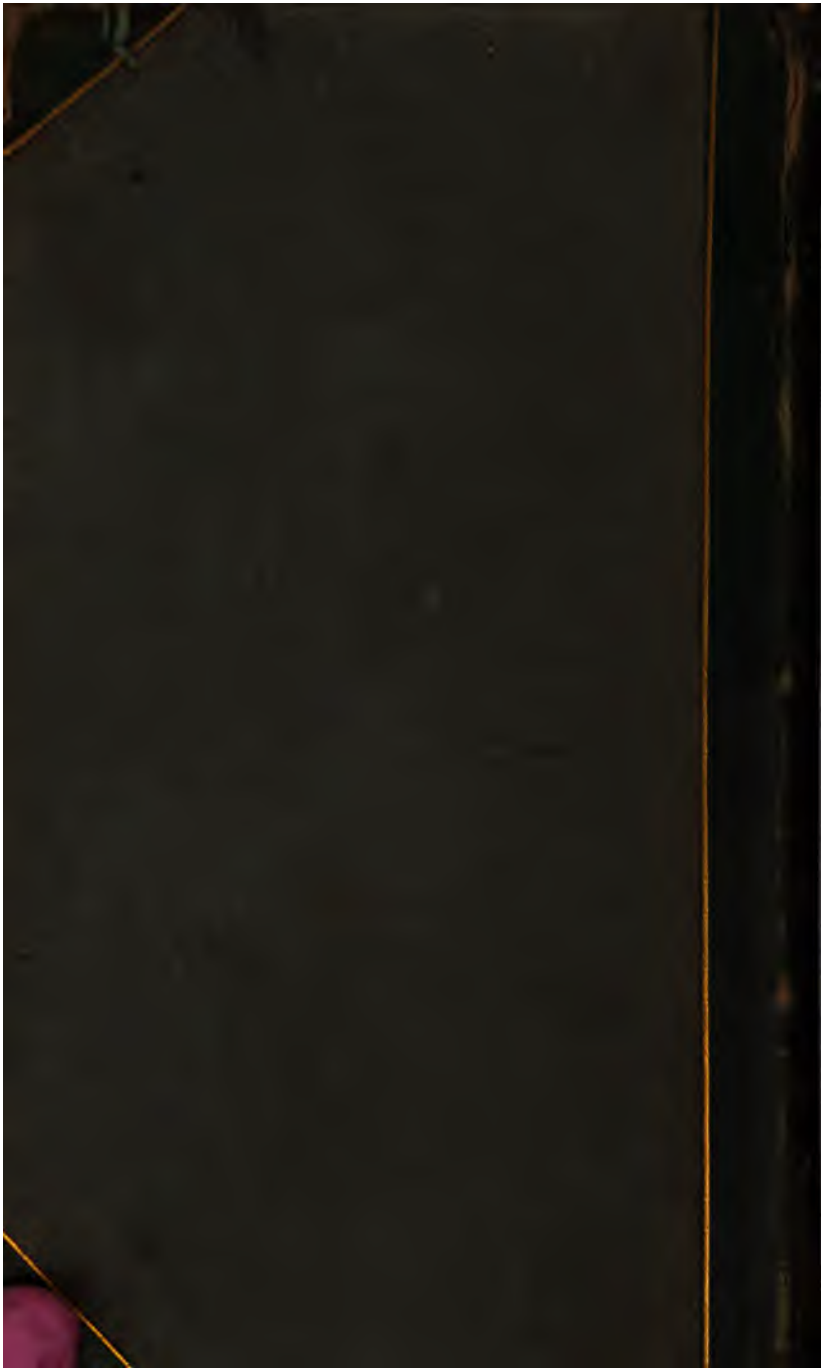
In the midst of her own terrible mental sufferings, amounting as they did to agonies, our poor wretched heroine thought of the alarm her mysterious disappearance must create amongst the domestics, some of whom had known and loved her from her childhood; and to prevent the creation of such uneasiness, she wrote a few lines, importing, " that to avoid being accompanied by any friend of Mr. Sternham's on her journey, and as a prevention for Betty's unnecessary return to Ireland, she had availed herself of an opportunity of obtaining safe convoy to her place of destination, whilst to avoid any interference to dissuade her from thus

going, she had adopted a secret departure."

The signal given, Rosa laid this note on the tea-table, where Conolly must be sure to find it; then with light footfalls, although her heart bore a heavy burden of despairing sorrow, Rosabella descended to the hall, when cautiously opening the street door, she admitted the trusty agent of Lord Flowerdew, who, with the ostler, who attended with the hack chaise, rapidly carried off her baggage; the trembling fugitive, almost fainting with anguished agitation, following with paralyzed limbs, almost unequal to the task of bearing her along, after she had cautiously effected a gentle close of the street door.

The old and respectable tenant of Lord Flowerdew was already in the chaise, in which the heart-wrung fugitive imdiately sought shelter; and the moment her baggage was adjusted, and she had offered a pecuniary reward to her faithful agent, which was respectfully but

firmly declined, the carriage moved rapidly on its way; and Rosa, the insulated Rosa, set out upon her self-inflicted exile.

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.

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